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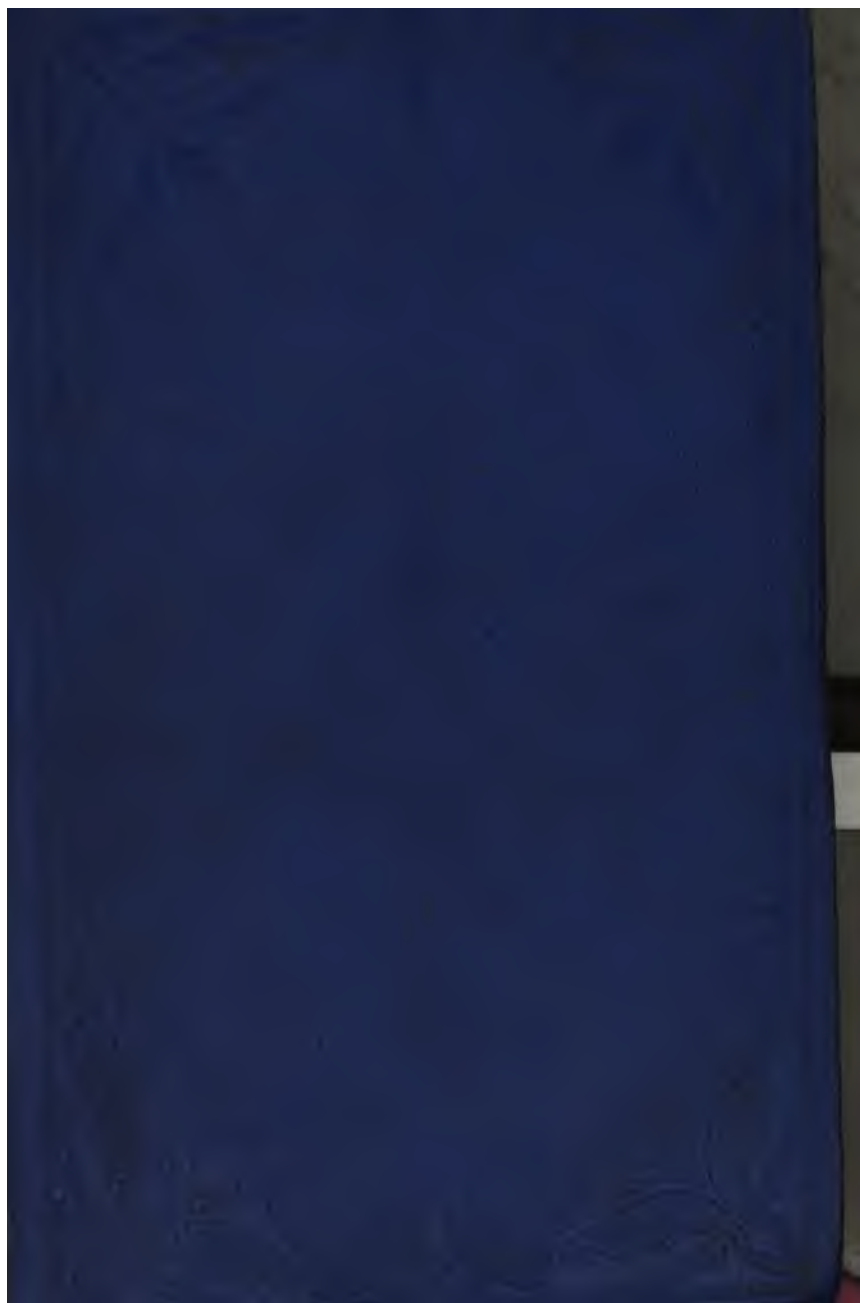
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ALLERTON AND DREUX;

OR,

The War of Opinion.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "A RHYMING CHRONICLE."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER XV.

THE FUNERAL BELL.

It was a beautiful afternoon, about three o'clock, when Marion and her brother went out by the North-road for a ride; Marion's foot was not yet quite strong enough to admit of her walking, but Elizabeth had lent her her horse, and none of the home party had proposed to accompany the brother and sister, as they wished to give them this opportunity for conversation together.

After riding for about two miles, they turned down a by-road with tall hazel hedges—the leaves of which were already beginning to wear the autumnal tint—and threaded it as it wound along at the foot of the hills, and by the sides of corn-fields and copses. The yellow sunshine lay softly on the landscape, and there was that thin, dream-like haze hanging over the distant woods, which often gives such an air of quiet to an August afternoon. They rode on for several miles in this by-road, talking principally of their friends at Swanstead, and relating various little things to each other, which

never would have been told but for an opportunity like this. At last the road took a sudden turn, almost straight up a very high hill, and when they had reached its summit, they involuntarily stopped their horses, to gaze at the beautiful rich country spread out at their feet—white cottages, with vines trailing over walls and roof, what happy abodes they seemed! but who could tell what passions might fret, or what cares might cark the hearts of those who dwelt in them!—farm-houses in the sunny hollows—groups of hop-pickers, crowding round the prostrate poles, in their white aprons—cattle, knee deep in the rich grass, and by the margin of a little river, which turned and twisted itself in and out and here and there, wasting its time (if time were any object) in a thousand doublings and returnings, sometimes floating softly along, without a ripple on its surface to show at what rate it went, in other places so thickly and completely overgrown with rushes, that it was quite an invisible river—a green riband winding through the corn-fields which, where the reapers had not yet entered them, looked like acres of rusty-coloured gold. All perfectly still, steeped in sunshine, as quiet as a picture or a dream. The sunbeams dropt through the hedge, and chequered the road at their feet in patches that did not waver; the clouds stood still, as if the wind had gone forward and left them behind; even the red poppies, growing so thickly in the fields, stood upright and never nodded their

heads. There was no movement and no sound, but that inner humming which the ear itself supplies when it is empty of all sound—that slight, soft ringing, like the music in a sea-shell—a witness that “the ear is not satisfied with hearing,” that it is restless for some of the sweet voices of the earth, and failing them, brings up the echo of sounds that are past.

But this silence was not for long: they had not been conscious of it many moments, when a musical note floated towards them, softened by the distance, but regular and clear; they lost it when it had been repeated twice, then a slight breeze sprung up and wafted it to them again more fully and distinctly—it was the tolling of a funeral bell.

Marion and her brother looked across the valley and up the opposite hill. There was a village church near its summit, with a slender white spire; the rest of the building was nearly hidden by a group of chesnut-trees crowded before it and sloping down the side of the hill; but the porch could be distinctly seen, and a few scattered gravestones in the church-yard. It was from this spire that the sounds proceeded, passing over the valley to the height where they were, which appeared nearly level with it. They heard the bell much more distinctly now that they had got accustomed to its tones; and as they went at a slow pace along the ridge of the hill, they saw the rustic funeral procession winding through the valley, the mourners

(chiefly women) with heads bowed down, and white hoods, which showed the youth of the deceased, the black pall with its snowy border glancing out from time to time in its slow progress between the trees.

They went on for another half-mile in silence. Many thoughts had been aroused by this scene. That state of feeling, which has been well called the "still sad music of humanity," was awakened in their hearts, and the funeral bell kept time to the strain.

We cannot fathom our own souls; and, especially among the young, there are many who have never considered how much they may be made to suffer. But sometimes—quite unexpectedly, it may be, even to themselves—their serenity is disturbed, and even in the happiest circumstances. The sight of human grief,—the flashing conviction of some approaching sorrow,—the sudden, though but momentary perception of a vague trouble hanging over the heads of some beloved objects—an insight, though but for a short time, into the wearing anxiety that haunts the paths of so many,—sometimes even a glance at a stranger's face, will give a pang of sudden fear and shrinking before the pains, the troubles, and the separations, which are even for them most surely and steadily approaching; and the young heart, sheltered as yet under the shadow of protecting love, begins to count over the number of its gourds, and wonder which of them will soonest wither away.

But it soon passes, this feeling. Early, happy youth is so incredulous; it believes only in theory that this is a world of woe. It easily forgets the short glimpse it has taken, and even though it should ponder with dutiful consideration over the complainings of some aged friend, or stretch its powers of fellow-feeling to enter into the misfortunes of all whom it loves, there is still a kind of luxury in the bestowal of this sympathy. There is something sweet in tears shed for others,—unselfish tears, and not divided between another's sorrow and one's own. In a case like this, oh! how much more blessed it is to *give* than to *receive*!

The funeral bell went on, but the funeral procession was out of sight. THEY had not seen the face of the dead,—they could not hear the bitter sobs of the mother!

The afternoon sun shone upon the long road stretching up to the church; the spire looked white and beautiful, and the sound of the bell floated through the sunny air, divested of its sadness, or retaining only enough to give sentiment to the scene.

But what was this? They had reached a turn in the lane, and come in view of two cottages a little further down, when a labouring man darted through the hedge just before Marion's horse, and cried out some unintelligible warning. The next instant a saddle-horse dashed past them at full gallop, the stirrups flying in the air. The man had

already seized Marion's horse by the reins, and was trying to quiet it. The lane was so narrow that it was a marvel how any thing going with such speed could have passed between them without unseating either. Her brother, who had now dismounted, came and took the reins from her unknown friend, who speedily helped her down; and in a cloud of dust, and between two frightened horses, Marion found herself holding the labouring man by the wrist, and begging him to tell her what was the matter.

The man took the reins, and called to Wilfred: "Get the lady up the bank, Sir."

There was a high grass bank at the side of the lane. He had scarcely time to comply with this command, which was given in the most peremptory manner, when back came the runaway horse, wild with terror, and one of their own horses was struggling in the dust. It was up again in an instant, and tugging at the reins, with a cut and bleeding head.

There was another man helping, and the first was chiding him, in no very measured terms, for having tried to stop "yon mad brute," by which, it seemed, he had sent it down again upon them.

Marion, half-fainting with fear, held by her brother. She had seen something carried into one of the cottages by two men,—something perfectly passive and motionless,—and she knew it must be the unfortunate rider of the runaway horse, whose

progress could now be marked by a rapidly advancing cloud of dust.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Wilfred,—
"and what is all this?"

"The clergyman, Sir,—him that came from Westport to bury poor old Maxwell's granddaughter."

"Thrown!" cried Wilfred. "Where is he, then?—hurt or killed?—or—what have you done with him? Can't we help him?"

"Thrown, Sir;—looked back just as he come to that first cottage;—horse shied, frightened, I reckon;—pitched on his head, poor gentleman."

"Oh! Wilfred," cried Marion, quivering with terror, "do, pray, go and see."

"Yes, my dear,—I will, indeed, Marion; but I can't leave you in this state."

"Put the lady on your own horse, Sir," said the labourer. "I'll engage to lead him; he's quite quiet. Bless you, Sir, she can't walk! We'll take her to the other cottage."

"No," said Marion, ready to faint, "not into that cottage."

"No, no, we're not a going to Maxwell's cottage," said the man, his rough voice instantly assuming the tone in which he might have spoken to a pretty child; "we're a going to t'other cottage, yonder, with the porch. Don't be frightened, Miss, there's a dear."

So saying, he took her up in his arms, set her on

Wilfred's horse, and held her on. It was not fifty yards to the cottage.

"Did you say it was a gentleman from Westport?" asked Wilfred.

"Yes, Sir. Be you from Westport?"

"Yes; but who was it? Don't you know his name?"

The man glanced at Marion. "You may as well go and see him, Sir, yourself first."

"Thank you for your consideration," said Marion; "but it's not at all likely to be any one I know. Poor man! Oh! I hope he is not very much injured."

The man shook his head, and answered Wilfred's question: "It's Mr. Dreux, Sir. Our parson being out, he came over to take the funeral. They've carried him into Maxwell's cottage."

Marion caught the name, and instantly begged her brother to let her go with him.

They were now at the cottage door. The man lifted her down, and set a chair for her. Her tremor had entirely subsided, but she wept violently with dread and excitement, while the funeral bell still sounded softly over the valley.

"Marion, you may come in afterwards, if you will let me go in first;—you may even be of use."

Marion promised to wait.

"So you do know the poor gentleman?" said the labourer. "Well, keep up heart then, Miss. Why, if he's not past everything, he'll be main glad to

have somebody about him that's not strange. So keep up heart, Miss."

"Oh, yes," faltered Marion, very glad of this rough kindness. "Indeed, I am trying to be calm."

All was perfectly still within the cottage. Marion listened with sharpened senses, but there was no questioning voice of sympathy, and no answer; no sound like complaining, not a groan, not a sigh.

Presently her brother came out.

"He is not killed!" whispered Marion, shuddering. "Oh! don't tell me that he is killed!"

"No, Marion, but quite insensible. You may come."

He led her through the small front kitchen, which was quite empty, and opening the door of a very low, whitewashed chamber on the ground-floor, beckoned her in.

He was lying on a narrow pallet bed, with his eyes shut, and the usual expression of his face not much altered. There were no signs of external injury beyond a bruise over the left temple, but he was breathing uneasily, and there was a convulsive quivering about his lips.

Greyson stooped to loosen the white handkerchief about his neck.

"Have they sent for a surgeon?" said Marion, hurriedly. "Oh! I hope they have."

"I know nothing. Can you watch beside him

while I go and see about it? Be calm, Marion; remember we are responsible for everything that is done."

"Oh, yes; indeed, I am calm. Leave me with him."

As her brother hurried out of the room, she first observed the presence of a miserable old woman, who was sitting on the only chair the place afforded, at the right side of the bed.

"Oh! my girl, my poor girl!" muttered the palsied creature, when Marion looked at her;—"who's to bury her? Oh! my poor daughter!—she'll break her heart this day!"

There was a close, oppressive feeling in the air of the chamber, and there was nothing on the low bedstead but the mattress. The feather bed, the clothes, and even the pillows were gone, and she felt conscious that this must be the chamber, and this the bed, from which they had just carried the coffin. She hastened to open the window, and as she stood watching the utterly insensible form, her excited fancy was busy with the funeral. She wondered what the people would do, now there was no one to bury the dead. Would they bring the coffin back, and think to lay it there again? The funeral bell kept tolling on. Oh! that it would cease! She thought it disturbed her patient, for he sighed deeply, and his face assumed a touching expression of sorrow and perplexity.

Marion knelt down by the low bed, and gently

drew off his gloves. Then she stepped out into the little garden at the back of the cottage, and brought some cold water from a pump, with which she bathed his forehead and the palms of his hands. She thought he could not be perfectly unconscious, for he muttered to himself, and often threw up his arms as if he would have touched his head, but easily allowed himself to be thwarted by her, as she took hold of them and drew them away.

Scarcely daring to breathe, she knelt and watched his face, which gradually assumed a look less and less like its own. It was not a look of pain, nor of fear, but rather of indescribable forlornness, which took possession of his features. There was a disturbed and yet helpless restlessness about the slight movement of his head, and when he whispered, as he often did, they were broken and incoherent words, but always seemed to express trouble and perplexity.

Her brother came to the door and beckoned the old woman away; Marion was left alone to watch him. The funeral-bell kept tolling on, so clearly and distinctly in the silence, that it marked by every stroke how fitful and irregular, how hurried and tremulous was the breathing of the injured man.

The afternoon sun streamed in upon the clear white-washed walls, through vine-leaves and flowering plants, which were trained outside the casement; the soft slight air came in, and moved the hair upon his temples. As she held his hand, she fancied

there was a change again for the better. He was breathing more freely; she stooped to listen, and he started and uttered her name distinctly, but in a whisper. He had never opened his eyes; but Marion, forgetting that if he had been really conscious of her presence, or sensible enough to be aware of what he said, he would not have addressed her by her Christian name, was relieved by what she took for a token of returning consciousness, and answered soothingly, "I am here, my dear Mr. Dreux; what can I do for you?" But he took no notice of her voice; his breathing again became quick and heavy, and his restlessness increased so much that she had great difficulty in holding back his hands from his head. While inexpressibly touched to find herself the subject of his impressions at such a time, when he seemed incapable of actual thought, she wept bitterly, and watched every movement and every change with a beating heart.

In the meantime the labouring man before mentioned had been sent by Wilfred upon his own horse, to a village two miles off, where the nearest surgeon lived. The road lay by the church, where the people were waiting with the dead woman. He was to tell them of the accident, and go as quickly as possible on his errand. There was no one left in either cottage but this poor old woman, and Greyson hoped some of the mourners would return, and render some assistance or advice as to what should be done for the patient.

To the restlessness of feeling himself responsible was now added anxiety at the non-return of his messenger. It was three-quarters of an hour since he had started, and there was no appearance of him yet, though he kept pacing about the road before the cottages, looking out in all directions. He came back to the bed-side, agitated and flushed. Of the two men who had carried in Mr. Dreux, one was of weak mind, and not capable of taking a message; the other had gone off in pursuit of the runaway horse, and had not made his appearance since.

"Oh, this waiting is dreadful," said Marion; "and every moment we are losing may be of the utmost consequence."

"Yes, Marion, but what can be done? Shall I set off to run to Westport?"

"If I only had some leeches," murmured Marion; "I am sure that must be a proper remedy, and I cannot endure this inaction any longer."

"Marion, he looks a great deal worse; I saw a great change when I came in. Oh, what shall we do!"

"If so be as you want leeches," said the palsy-stricken woman, who had followed Greyson into the chamber,—*"if so be as you want leeches, and would take some o' me?"*

"Where are they? O yes, of course, we'll take them."

The old woman hobbled to a closet in the wall, and brought out a bottle with a great number in it.

"The Doctor ordered 'em for my poor dear, the night afore she died," she said, holding out the bottle; "but, hows'ever, she was dead afore they comed into the house, so you'll pay me for 'em, dear?"

"Yes, O yes," cried Marion, hastily laying aside her hat and veil, and preparing to use them.

The old woman could give no assistance, but care and tenderness made up to Marion for her slender experience. As soon as they were on, she entreated her brother to return to Westport for a physician. It was eight miles off, and he would be obliged to go on foot, as her horse was hurt; but then their messenger was not returned, and they could think of nothing else to be done.

With a hurried glance at the patient, he left the room, closing the door after him. He had not been gone ten minutes when Mr. Dreux opened his eyes for the first time, and looked Marion full in the face. It was a look which expressed neither surprise at seeing her there, nor recognition, nor consciousness, —nothing but a vacant stare. His eyes soon wandered from her; he began to talk hurriedly, and used several incoherent expressions of pain, making repeated attempts to throw up his hands.

Fully occupied now, Marion knelt at his head, sometimes speaking to him, at others listening sadly to the quick, restless breathing, which was accompanied by a sound like low, suppressed sobbing. There was something terrible to Marion in the

responsibility of her situation ; every change, every start, sent the blood to her heart. But at length she had the inexpressible relief of seeing his eyes gradually close again, and the forlorn expression which had so much alarmed her fade by slow and almost imperceptible degrees. She could scarcely tell when and how the change had been effected, but the dreaded look was gone, and in its place was a quiet natural expression, only clouded by weariness and pain.

In a little time longer his breathing became regular and soft, his lips ceased to tremble, and the burning hand, which had been so restless and quick in its movements, now closed languidly upon hers. The old woman was sensible of the change, and as she hobbled to Marion's side, to give what little assistance she could with her palsied hands, she whispered that she was main glad the leeches had done so well, and did not add anything this time about her desire for payment.

At this instant the sound of voices was heard in the outer room ; the old woman opened the door, and left her alone ; she closed it after her, but Marion could distinctly hear the sobbing of some person in great sorrow, while several others were trying to comfort her.

She knew these must be the returned mourners, but was just then so fully occupied as to have no time for thought on the subject, beyond a wish that they might not come in and interrupt her. This

wish, however, was not gratified, for in a few minutes a decent-looking woman, in a black gown and white hood, came in and closed the door after her. She had evidently been crying bitterly, and her eyes were red and swollen; but the moment she saw how Marion was occupied, she applied herself to assist her, with great skill and tenderness. In the deepest silence the next half-hour passed, though not without many cheering hopes on Marion's part. Her patient seemed now to have sunk into a natural easy sleep. He was perfectly quiet and calm,—so very calm and still, that but for a slight movement about his parted lips, she might easily have thought he had ceased to breathe. She watched him intently, almost breathlessly. The noble features were perfectly colourless, their expression touchingly pensive. She thought the room was too light, and arose to draw the remains of a tattered curtain across the casement.

The rest of the mourners had left the front room, and gone over to the opposite cottage, and there was no sound but the cautious footsteps of the woman, as she passed in and out, bringing what Marion required. She had lighted a fire in the front room, and set on a kettle; she seemed not at all surprised or distressed, and asked no questions, but applied herself at once to the business in hand; and when at length their task was over, and all signs of it cleared away, she set a chair for Marion, and left her to watch for the waking of the patient. The

time had seemed very long to Marion, but on a reference to her watch she found her brother had only been away an hour; it was therefore another hour before he could be expected back; but Mr. Dreux's perfect tranquillity made her feel sure she had been doing right, and she sat down to watch him with recovered composure. She had taken off her hat and veil, and now that the heat of the afternoon was moderated by a slight breeze, the colour began to return to her pale cheek.

In a short time the kind cottager returned, and brought her a cup of tea, begging her not to mind being left alone, as she had sent her neighbours to the opposite cottage with her mother and grandmother, lest they should make too much noise.

Marion detained her to ask, "Was the poor young woman who is dead your sister?"

"Yes; and mother takes on much worse than ever now"——

"Because there was no one to bury her! What, then, have they done with the body?"

"Two neighbours stayed in the porch, ma'am, to watch the coffin. Mr. Clay (the Vicar of a neighbouring village) will be home at nine o'clock to-night, and she's to be buried then."

"I feel the more grateful for the help you have given me, as you are in so much trouble yourself."

"Ah! Miss, we shall get on badly in this world unless we're willing to help one another."

Marion took the cup, and thanked her. It might

have been the sound of their voices, or the closing of the door, that aroused the sleeper, for when she looked again his eyes were open. He looked at her with some slight surprise, but presently he closed them again, saying, in a faint voice, "Only a dream." Sinking to sleep again, Marion watched him with the cup in her hand. She had greatly hoped that when he next awoke he would be sensible, and it was a great disappointment to find, as she believed, that this was not the case. She resumed her kneeling position, and held back his hands. In a few minutes he awoke again, with a sudden start of pain, and uttered a few uneasy words about not liking to be left alone. Marion held the cup to his parched lips, and as he drained the welcome draught, she said, in the softest tones of her sweet voice, "*He* has said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'"

Her attitude as she leaned towards him, and the earnest expression of her eyes, seemed to arrest his attention, but still, not quite satisfied as to the reality of her presence, he lifted up his hand, and as if wishing to try whether she was sensible to touch, took one of her long soft curls in it, and remained gazing at her with a kind of tranquil wonder.

But Marion had endured too much anxiety, and was too free from any other feeling towards him than desire for his recovery, to be much abashed by this scrutiny, and gently disengaging her hair, she said a few quiet

words to him expressive of her hope that he would not attempt to move (for he had tried to raise his head), and going to the door she asked for some more tea, as she thought it had refreshed him.

Gradually as he looked round the room, after she had returned to her seat, he seemed to understand what had happened, and when she had given him the tea, he was perfectly collected, and appeared easy, or at least free from any acute pain.

Marion sat perfectly quiet, scarcely venturing to change her position, for she saw that now he was satisfied of her actual presence it excited him,—the pulse in his temples became more rapid, and his veins swelled and throbbed. She wished him to sleep again, and hoped at first that her silence might enable him to do so, but she soon found that his mind was now painfully awake, and at work; and sensible that nothing would be more likely to soothe him than the idea that his recovery was a subject of great solicitude with her, she ventured to talk to him in a calm, gentle tone, with the acceptable tenderness which women know so well how to bestow on invalids. Then, finding that her words had their desired effect, she went on to speak gently to him of the sympathy of Christ. The subdued tones of her voice, and the solicitude expressed in her face, gradually calmed his excitement, and he presently sunk again into a deep but tolerably quiet sleep.

And now Marion's watch was over. She heard the

sound of carriage wheels at the gate, and the next minute her aunt, with Wilfred and two physicians, entered the little chamber.

Marion was not aware, till the necessity for exertion was over, how greatly she had been excited. As soon as she saw her aunt the tears began to flow fast from her eyes, and she became very faint. They took her to the little open casement, and as soon as she recovered herself she inquired nervously whether what she had done was right.

"Quite right, my dear Miss Greyson," said the elder of the two physicians, turning from the pallet; and then advancing to Mrs. Paton, he said, as he felt her niece's pulse, "You will be glad to hear that there is no fracture."

"Aunt," said Marion, "where is Elinor? and have you brought a nurse?"

"Mrs. Silverstone is coming, my dear; she is to tell Elinor of the accident, and bring her here."

"Oh, we shall do very well for a nurse," said the physician, "and you are no longer responsible, my dear Miss Greyson, so don't make yourself uneasy; you have done wonders."

But it was so obvious that she was uneasy, that as her aunt arranged her hair, and assisted her with her hat, she reminded her in a low voice that her staying any longer was quite out of the question,

"O yes, I know, aunt," said Marion, glancing at the patient.

"But, my dear," returned her aunt, "if it would be a satisfaction to you, *I* will stay and attend to Dr. Grainger's directions, till Mrs. Silverstone comes, and Elinor."

"Oh, thank you, aunt," said Marion, drawing the gloves on to her trembling hands. "If you would, I should be so thankful."

"And now come, Marion," said her brother hastily, "and when you get into the air you will feel better again."

Marion turned to kiss her aunt, and suffered herself to be led away, her boy-brother being in an agony lest she should appear too much distressed, though he probably might have forgotten her dignity on such an occasion, if the unlucky charade had not been fresh in his mind.

She had scarcely reached the carriage, when the woman who had rendered her so much assistance came up and pulled her by the sleeve. Marion looked round.

"I beg your pardon, Miss," said the woman, who did not much like her errand, "but grandmother will keep worriting about the leeches. She seems to think you owe her for 'em. Grandmother's old and childish, Miss," she added, colouring deeply as she observed Marion's perplexed look, "and she would not be satisfied without I told you of it."

"Oh, I know what she means," said Greyson,

drawing out his purse and giving the woman some silver "Yes, you're quite right; I am sorry I forgot it."

"You are still there, my dear," said Mrs. Paton, coming up to the carriage door; "I am glad of that. Come back for a moment—I want you, Marion."

Marion followed her aunt into the chamber. Mr. Dreux was awake; and Dr. Grainger, who was feeling his pulse, waved his hand towards her, and said, encouragingly, "There, my dear Sir, you see you are not so bad as you thought; it was no delirious fancy. Are you satisfied now?"

Whatever Dr. Grainger might say, or however light he might make of the patient's condition, his expression of countenance was anything but satisfactory, and when Mr. Dreux lifted his eyes to Marion's face, he looked at him in a manner which betrayed a good deal of uneasiness.

"Are you content now?" he asked, in the same soothing tone, in which a little very gentle banter was mixed; "or are we to say it was only a dream?"

Marion saw the same uncertainty in his face which had before prompted him to touch her, and wishing to remove it, she drew nearer, and laid her hand upon his as the Doctor held it. It was burning hot, and even in the short time she touched it she felt the rapidly-going pulse,—yet the desired effect was produced, for though he said nothing,

his face instantly became calm, and, as if he dreaded the least excitement, he turned away and closed his eyes.

The physician made a sign to her that she might go, so after taking a last hurried look, she left the cottage, threw herself into a corner of the carriage, and gave free course to her tears.

But not for long. She soon began to listen to her brother, who kept industriously plying her with consolation, as is the custom with many kind people, who, if they see you in distress, contrive to find so many alleviating and comforting circumstances in the case, that at last they seem to make out, to their own satisfaction (if not to yours), that on the whole it was rather fortunate than otherwise that the distressing circumstance occurred.

It certainly was a consolation to find she had done right, and it was another that her aunt was going to stay at the cottage a few hours longer, and would bring tidings in the evening as to how the physicians thought their patient. So Marion dried her eyes, and looked out of the window, trying very hard to be calm and composed.

The sun was getting very low. It illuminated the windows of the church on the hill, so that they looked as if they were lighted from within with burning torches. It streamed through the thick foliage of the trees, and made of the dark clouds on the horizon a fine background for the white spire. There was the little river winding through the

valley—the reapers and the hop-pickers were coming home through the corn—the poppies were waving in the soft evening air,—but there was no funeral bell now to startle a serene heart with its unwelcome forebodings.

The landscape before her was toned down, its colours had lost much of their brilliance; but the tone of her feelings was also lowered, they had changed very much since she rode between those hazel hedges glowing in the broad sunshine of an August afternoon, and on reflecting, she almost wished that secure feeling of happiness which she had felt during the beginning of her ride might never come again; it would be better, she thought, never to rest at ease and in such tranquil quietness than to be so rudely startled from it. The sorrow and anxiety would be easier to bear if they were not so utterly unexpected.

Soon after Marion left the cottage Elinor arrived, with Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone. She behaved with wonderful self-possession, and when she had seen her brother, and observed the slightness of the external injury, she was evidently greatly relieved; and though Dr. Grainger said nothing in reply to her expressions of thankfulness that the accident was no worse, she was too much absorbed to observe it.

Soon after the physicians were gone, the invalid awoke suddenly, and said, in a hurried whisper, “Where’s Allerton?” Mrs. Dorothy put him off

with some slight answer, and Elinor's emotion seemed to her the natural consequence of hearing him speak for the first time. It was a trial she had to endure many times during the night, for he never awoke without asking the same question, being generally satisfied when she came up to him and laid her hand on his, or held some cooling drink to his parched lips. She felt quite sure that they had parted in anger, and a few broken words which he uttered now and then confirmed her in this conviction. Having her own private sources of sorrow added to her anxiety for him, it was no wonder that she exhausted herself with weeping, and that every repetition of the question cost her a renewal of her tears.

In the morning Dr. Grainger came and a surgeon with him. Her brother was awake, and, though feeble, did not seem to be in pain. Elinor was struck by their gravity, and watched them as if her life hung on their words. They took seats close to him, and asked one or two questions, which he answered collectedly. Then the surgeon said, in an abstracted tone, "Let me see, what day is this?"

"Ah, what day?" repeated Dr. Grainger, as if he could not remember it either.

Mr. Dreux answered, with a movement of irritation, "It's Thursday."

"Is it?" said the Doctor, composedly and slowly; "yes, I think it is; and what day of the month, I wonder?"

"Sunday was the 16th," said the invalid, turning his head restlessly on the pillow, "so this is the 20th."

Upon this they seemed pleased, and presently went into the outer room to confer together.

After a short interval Elinor followed them. "We think the patient somewhat improved," said the senior physician in answer to her appealing look. "His mind is clearer than could be expected. He has certainly a great deal of fever."

"I hope he is not in danger," said Elinor, the idea occurring to her for the first time.

"I shall come again in the afternoon," said Doctor Grainger, without answering her question.

"But he is not in danger?" repeated Elinor. "Oh, don't tell me that he is!"

"Why, there is a certain degree of danger attending all illness," said the physician, slowly. Elinor shuddered. "We shall hope to find him somewhat better to-morrow," he continued, soothingly.

"And if he is worse?"—


"Oh, we must not distress ourselves with such a fear. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Elinor returned to the room and gazed at her brother with a sinking heart. He was just sufficiently sensible to be aware that if he talked he should talk nonsense; but a confused recollection of his quarrel with Allerton continually tormented him. He was divided between his desire to see him and a half-recollection that he ought not to talk of

him. In spite of this he found himself often asking for him, and his kind old friend increased his perplexity by promising that he should see him soon. Towards afternoon he became less restless, and hope strengthened again in Elinor's heart. She needed some encouragement, for her mind was exhausted with anxiety as well as her bodily strength. About four o'clock the physician came again, and said he was much the same.

Mrs. Dorothy then wished Elinor to go to bed, and though she could scarcely endure to leave her brother, she had not strength to resist long, and had but just laid her head on the pillow, when she fell into a heavy sleep.

It was hours before she awoke, which she did at last in a fright, and hurried down to her brother's room. It was the middle of the night, and the place was still as nothing but a sick man's chamber can be. The nurse and Mrs. Silverstone were sitting up, the former dozing in her chair: the latter nodded encouragingly to Elinor, and pointed to her brother, who was lying in a deep sleep. Elinor recovered from her nightmare terror and gratefully kissed the old lady, who urged her to retire till morning, reminding her that she would have to sit up the next night, and entreating her not to waste her strength needlessly. Elinor could not comply. She sat watching with the other two attendants through the rest of the night, and was



still close to her brother, holding his feverish hand, when the physicians arrived.

"He is rather better to-day," they said, "but he must be kept extremely quiet and nearly in darkness."

Elinor followed them into the next room, and said, with a face of terror, "But he did not speak collectedly to-day. Is he delirious?"

"That confusion is partly the effect of opiates," was the reply; and again she was put off with a hope of the favourable things they thought they should have to tell to-morrow.

She felt relieved of a part of the weight which had pressed down her soul; but though she believed they really thought him better, it frightened her to hear him talk at random, especially as the one theme of his rambling thoughts was still Allerton, an endless succession of regrets that he was not there, and entreaties that he might be sent for.

"Which we can't do, my dear," Mrs. Dorothy said with a sigh, "for Dr. Grainger tells me Mr. Allerton's ill—confined to his room, I think he told me."

Elinor knew that whatever her brother might say, they could not send for Allerton, and anxious as this information made her about him, she was glad that, in the old lady's eyes, there existed a sufficient reason for his absence.

In the evening they again came to see their

patient, and still said he was better,—decidedly better, and were obviously both surprised and pleased to find him so.

Elinor sat by him that night, and in the morning she felt that he now really was better; his face had resumed its usual expression, and, owing to the shortness of his illness, his features were very little changed.

She met the physicians with a tranquil face, and read their favourable report in their eyes before they left her brother.

"He really is better now, I am sure of it," she said, as she joined them in the front room.

"Yes, really better, and there is now little fear of a relapse."

They then desired her to take some rest, and went away, she feeling now as unduly elated as if her brother had not another peril to encounter, and might expect to go home in a day or two.

He was awake when she returned, and leaning over his pillow smoothed it tenderly, and spoke to him with all her own gentle hopefulness.

"Am I better?" he inquired.

"Yes, much better, dearest," she replied, "but you will be very quiet, will you not? You will not move, nor even *think*?"

"Very well," he answered, and shut his eyes to ponder on something which had been puzzling him for several hours.

The influence of the opiates was now completely

spent; the nurse and Elinor had retired, leaving him alone with Mrs. Dorothy. He knew she would not be induced to talk to him, and therefore there was nothing left for him but to speculate over and over again on the same puzzling subject. His fever was rapidly subsiding; the furniture, which hitherto had seemed to spin round him, every object invested with a dazzling halo, had now settled down steadily; his thoughts were becoming distinct, and his recollections defined; he was perversely disinclined to sleep, and an event or a dream of the night presented itself to him in vivid colouring. It must have been in the night, for he remembered that a small lamp was burning on the floor, shaded with an open book, that the light might not come near him. The nurse was in the front room, dozing, no doubt; and his sister, who was alone with him, was sitting on a cushion at the foot of the pallet-bed, and resting her head on a pillow; he could see her face, which still bore the traces of tears,—her dishevelled hair had fallen back from it, but sleep had restored the bloom to her cheeks, for he remembered that she certainly *was asleep*, and that he had tried to calculate how many nights she had sat up with him. After this he had shut his eyes again, and got entangled in the meshes of a half-delirious dream, till a slight noise startled him, and he had awoke with his oft-repeated exclamation, "Where's Allerton?"

His sister still slept. He had spoken in a con-

fused whisper. He was conscious of the presence of a man standing near him, and when he could collect his thoughts he saw that it was Allerton; but looking dreadfully pale, and gazing at him with an expression of agony which had caused him to close his eyes and turn away, for he could not bear to be disturbed.

What happened next he could not recollect. He thought it must have been some time after this that Allerton had said, "Do you know me, Dreux?" and that he had tried to answer, but had failed. After this, by degrees, as he thought on the subject, his recollection recovered the confused interval of delirium which had followed. He remembered putting up his hands, under the impression that the ceiling was falling upon him. This interval seemed an hour, but it might have occupied but two minutes. Then he remembered seeing Allerton kneeling by his bed, that he was holding one of his hands, that his head was bowed down, his chest heaved, and he wept with such bitterness of agony as none but natures so loving and so passionate can. He saw that his sister still slept, and remembered that, as Allerton knelt by him, he poured forth against himself the most bitter reproaches and uttered the most poignant regrets. He thought that, at every pause, he had tried to answer him, but without success, he supposed; for, when Allerton lifted up his face and looked at him, he had certainly addressed him, but not as a man who was

capable of observing him or at all conscious of his presence. He had known, at the time, that this was a mistake, and that he was quite collected. He had tried once more to speak to him, and had said, "Don't distress yourself, I am better."

He remarked that Allerton had looked at him with almost incredulous hope when he said it, and had bent his head to listen, upon which he had repeated the sentence, adding a desire that he would stay a while, and a wonder that he had never been before.

He had scarcely said this when he remembered their quarrel, and all the circumstances respecting his sister came clearly back to him. He tried to raise his head, and, as he did so, Allerton put his arm under it, and said, with deep regret, but not as if addressing him,—“Is it all forgotten?—and so soon. Oh, the dreadful cause!”

Upon this he found strength to answer, in a low, faint voice, “I remember it now; and how we parted.”

He had not intended to give pain by this remark, but he observed that Allerton shuddered on hearing it and lowered his head again. He did not feel any answering emotion, and again became very much confused.

As he now lay awake in the broad daylight, he did not recover these slight circumstances and their sequence without a considerable effort; he was still weak enough to be wearied by it, and sunk to sleep.

It was afternoon when he awoke. Elinor was sitting by him; she gave him some jelly, and then, it being a very sultry afternoon, she opened the door, which led into the garden, and he instantly remembered that he had seen the man enter by that door before he knew who he was.

As he lay awake, looking out into the green shady garden, he began to speculate as to whether this visit of Allerton's was a reality or a dream. He now recollected various other circumstances, but whether his active imagination had suggested them during this last sleep, whether he had dreamed them during the night, or whether they were waking truths, he could not decide. He carried down his supposed recollections, step by step, to the point where he had left them in the morning. He thought, after this, he must have talked confusedly, for the next thing he recollected was Allerton's voice, in its lowest tones, trying to soothe him; he had mastered his emotion, and was looking earnestly at him, as if waiting for an answer to some question.

"Can you ever forgive me," he repeated, speaking in suppressed tones. "If you can, oh, let me hear you say it before we part, perhaps for ever."

He had answered to the purpose, though he did not know what.

Allerton went on:—"The last time we were together you called me 'brother.' I did not care

for it then, but, oh! how happy it would make me to hear you say it now!"

He knew he had exerted himself to say the required word, upon which Allerton embraced him and went away, he supposed; for when he next awoke, his sister was close to him, holding him by the hand, and telling him what a delightful sleep he had had.

He replied, as she thought, at random: "And if he was really here, of course he will come again?"

His sister kissed him tenderly, and said, "Dearest Arthur, you always awake so much confused." As she handed some lemonade to him, she said, "Where is the ether?"

Elinor's eyes filled with tears when he answered, "Allerton put it on that chair."

The ether was standing on the chair.

Elinor said, "No doubt nurse put it there, dear." She was going to add,—“I wish you could spare me the constant mention of Mr. Allerton's name,” but she saw that he was perplexed, and tried to divert him from the subject by remarks on indifferent matters. This would not do. He presently said:—

"You did not see him, of course, my love; you were asleep."

"I asleep, Arthur!" said Elinor, with an incredulous smile. "O no; try to think of something else,—Mr. Allerton will not come; it was only

your wish to see him that made you dream of him. Don't you remember telling me that we must both learn to do without him?"

"But he did come."

"Why, it's not yet dawn. Would he come in the middle of the night, dearest? Well, but, Arthur, if he came once, he will assuredly come again."

"Yes, I suppose he will."

"Then, if he does not come to-day, you will try not to be always thinking about him and expecting him."

Elinor now hoped she had shaken what she considered a half-delirious fancy, and went on, in a soothing voice: "And you never ask after your other friends, Arthur. Don't you remember the Greysons, how kind they were to you? Are there no people in the world that you care for besides Mr. Allerton?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Tell me their names."

"Dear Arthur,—well, I am one of them."

"Yes; come and lay your head on my pillow. Don't cry, Elinor,—this confusion in my head makes me say inconsiderate things."

This short conversation with Elinor did not form a part of his present speculations, but he now began to remember his duty, and inquired whether a Sunday had passed during his illness, who had served his church, and who had undertaken his various other engagements.

Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone was always with him in Elinor's absence, but she would not give him much information, and advised him not to talk. But the crisis was passed, and though he still felt extremely feeble, he was already beginning to suffer from the peculiar restlessness attending convalescence. In the afternoon Elinor came again, and his kind old friend left him for a few hours. He then tried what he could do with his sister, and nothing but her perfect ignorance of what had been going on since his illness prevented her from answering any question he chose to ask. He then wished her to read to him, but she had scarcely found a Bible when Doctor Grainger came in. Again Elinor saw the expression of surprise, as well as pleasure.

He beckoned to her to follow him, and said, "We find Mr. Dreux remarkably well this afternoon. We are inclined to think the injury to the brain must have been much slighter than was at first apprehended; it is not by any means sufficient to account for all this fever."

He then questioned her as to her brother's previous state of health, and asked whether anything had lately happened which was likely to have shocked and distressed him. Elinor said nothing, but her face was a sufficient answer.

"Well, then," said the friendly physician, "if Mr. Dreux has another good night I shall hope to pronounce him out of danger; and, probably, in about a week or ten days he may be able to return home."

How light her heart was during the rest of the day, or how happy she felt, it would be impossible to describe; the absorbing nature of her trial, and the great personal exertion it had involved, had, for the time, thrown her previous sorrow into the background. If she had lost her brother, she felt that this additional loss would almost have weighed her down, but now she incessantly repeated to herself,—“If God will only spare *him* to me, I think I can bear the other loss very well.”

Completely absorbed in watching him and waiting on him, the next few days passed quietly enough with her; she almost forgot to be sorrowful while observing his gradual restoration. They were too far from Westport to allow of more than a very few inquirers after his health, and the cottages were situated in such a secluded lane that there were never any passers-by.

The people who had lived in the cottage they now occupied had been easily persuaded to give it up, by a present of money; they had taken away what little furniture they possessed, and some of a better description had been sent on to them from Westport. The woman who had assisted Marion had been retained in the character of servant; and a square carpet, a sofa, a few chairs, a table, and some few books, had completely altered the aspect of the front kitchen. The chamber in which her brother lay was equally improved, and through the open door and window he could see the long narrow

garden, with its garniture of tall sunflowers, hollyhocks, its bed of thyme, sweet marjoram, and angelica, edged with double daisies, and its two "pleasure borders," filled with heart'sease, pinks, and cabbage-roses.

How happy was Elinor the first time he was able to leave his room and lie on the sofa! One of the strongest traits in her character was its hopefulness; she was always the first to see every good symptom, always determined to make the best of every drawback, always ready to echo his ideas when he was cheerful, and to soothe and reassure him when he was tormented with restlessness and gloom.

When Doctor Grainger came that evening he found his patient lying on the sofa, and Elinor sitting at work by the little table; she had that morning indulged herself with a walk, and the room was garnished with a number of field-flowers which she had brought in with her. Mrs. Dorothy had placed a few in her hair to please her brother, and as she moved about, her manner, though retaining the quietness so pleasant to invalids, was so expressive of happiness that, according to the old saying, she seemed to tread on air.

"All this morning I have fancied I heard bells, a peal of bells," she said, addressing the Doctor.

"Notwithstanding the interest that young ladies take in wedding-bells," said the old gentleman, good-humouredly, "I hold it to be impossible that you

could have heard the bells of Pelham's Church seven or eight miles off, Miss Elinor, though they are ringing, no doubt, at this moment, for Miss Elizabeth Paton was married this morning."

"Elizabeth married this morning!" said Elinor, surprised. "How strange, when I was to have been present, that I actually should never have remembered the day!"

"You have had so many other things to think of, my sweet Elinor," said her brother, taking up her hand; "but I hope you sent to excuse yourself."

"Oh, yes, a week ago; but I am sure I did hear bells," persisted Elinor.

"You are fond of the sound of bells; you were happy this morning, and your imagination supplied it."

"Well, at any rate it was a good omen, Miss Dreux," said the physician, "and I think you might have really heard them, without either the help of imagination or such acuteness of ear as to distinguish them eight miles off; for I now remember that Mr. Paton has a small estate about three miles from hence, and I think it very likely his tenants might set the bells ringing on such an occasion."

"I cannot possibly believe in that version of the story," said Elinor, laughing; "it is so very commonplace!"

"Then we shall be obliged to fall back on th

old superstition, Miss Dreux ; don't you know that when a lady hears a peal of bells, it is a sure sign that she will be married within the year ?”

He saw in an instant that he had made an unlucky remark, for the tears came into Elinor's eyes in spite of herself ; her spirits were still far from settled, and this unfortunate speech was too much for her.

“ And now let me see how we are off for medicine,” he said, instantly rising and turning his back to them, while he examined the contents of a small corner cupboard.

He made his scrutiny last as long as he could when he turned round again Elinor was gone ; but she returned when he had taken his leave, without any other traces of her tears than served to give a still softer expression to her sweet face.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RING.

THE next few days were spent very quietly by the inhabitants of the cottage; Elinor found plenty to do, and her brother, not being allowed to read or write, amused himself as he lay on his couch with watching the movements of others.

It was quite impossible in such a house that they could have a regular servant: the woman who waited on them sat during the day in the opposite cottage, and there she did all the cooking; she came over when they beckoned to her, but she was an awkward personage, and Elinor found it less trouble to wait on herself than employ her. So, among other things, she took to washing the tea-things, and after each meal setting them in array upon the chimney-piece.

It amused her brother to see these operations, and she easily found others which she made it appear must needs be done. He liked to see her flitting about, for she did everything gracefully, and it was something new to see her come in out of the garden

with a basketful of apples, which she pared with her silver knife and sliced into a pie-dish, sitting down to the task with deliberate care, and then sending the dish over to have the crust manufactured in the opposite cottage. She took care to have something of the kind to do every day; sometimes she shelled peas for dinner, or sliced French beans upon a wooden trencher, or printed little round pats of butter with extraordinary care, and garnished them with sprigs of parsley.

The next day Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone was to leave them: she had bestowed unbounded care upon her nursling, and shed tears of delight when she saw him able to raise his thin, lengthy figure from the couch, and recreate himself with a walk to the gate of the tiny cottage-garden; on his part, he repaid her affection with a kind of filial preference, which sometimes made Elinor just a little jealous, though this was a feeling that she would not have acknowledged for the world, even to herself. She sometimes wondered what it was that made her services so peculiarly acceptable; it was not certainly that she was amusing, for she never said a word—she did not even inquire of her patient whether he wished or whether he wanted anything; all *that* she knew by intuition, in spite of which she never seemed to be watching him. It might have appeared that her mind was not occupied about him, if she had not come to his side just at the right moment.

As for him, he submitted to her mandates with a kind of pleased docility; even during his greatest weakness, he revolted as well as he could from the hired nurse; he would, when at all delirious, refuse to let her bathe his temples, sometimes would command her imperiously to leave his chamber; but everything Mrs. Dorothy did was acceptable—he did not want to have Joseph sent for—he did not want even Elinor to take the old lady's vocation out of her hands; she brushed his hair for him, and he was not at all contumacious; she cut up his dinner and gave it to him with a fork; she called him "my dear,"—that was right too; the most delightful unanimity subsisted between them, a taciturn friendship, very peculiar, but very sweet. He was excessively sorry to part with the old lady, but one of her sisters was ill and had a superior claim to himself. She promised him, as she might have done some favourite child, that she would certainly come and see him again very soon, and he lifted up his pale, hollow cheek to be kissed at parting, much as he might have done if she had been his mother.

Upon her departure, he tried very hard to throw off the invalid and resume his more manly occupation, but it would not do, and in consequence of sitting too long writing a letter, he was so much fatigued, that for the next two days he could scarcely lift his head from his couch.


As long as he had been in danger, young

Greyson had ridden over daily to inquire after him ; now that he was better, the family contented themselves by sending over a groom.

By this man he sent a message that he was very much better, and would be most happy to see Mrs. Paton, if she would favour him with a visit.

There were many reasons why it fretted him to be without tidings from Westport, and without a sight of any of the Paton family. He wished, if he never saw Marion again, at least to convey his thanks to her, and he knew she was to return very shortly to Swanstead. He was very restless for want of tidings respecting Allerton's movements, for he had never sent to inquire after him, never been to see him,—unless, indeed, it was true that he had been with him that midnight ; it was still scarcely possible to give up that belief, unlikely though the circumstances seemed.

As might have been expected, Mrs. Paton called after this message, and Marion and Dora with her ; the latter did not get out of the carriage, but Mrs. Paton came in with her niece. They had been sitting at home all the morning to receive calls of congratulation, and Marion was dressed in all her bridal decorations. Always lovely and interesting as he had thought her since their first meeting, she had never appeared to him with so many attractions as during this farewell visit, while she sat almost entirely mute, and scarcely daring to lift up her eyes. The soft slight bloom fluctuated in her cheek, and as



she moved, the golden locket hanging from her neck was sometimes in shadow and sometimes glittered in the sunshine cast upon it through the cottage casement. That same sunshine covered her dress with a wavering lattice-work of shadow, mingled with clear imprints of vine-leaves.

A strong constraint seemed to be hanging over them all. Mr. Dreux could not speak to Marion; Marion could not speak to any one. Mrs. Paton was very uncomfortable, from uncertainty as to how they felt towards each other. At length Marion looked up; her glance met Elinor's; the two girls looked earnestly at each other, and their eyes filled with tears. Marion's did not seem, in their appealing gaze, to ask for gratitude, but rather to deprecate reproach.

Mrs. Paton saw that a very little thing would overpower Elinor, and did what she could to bring indifferent subjects before her mind. She talked of Elizabeth's wedding; remarked on the beautiful weather she had for her wedding-tour; she had heard from her son-in-law that Elizabeth was enchanted with the lakes; she was delighted to find that they (Mr. and Miss Dreux) hoped to be able to return to Westport the next week; finally, she hoped Mr. Dreux would spare his sister to spend a short time with her before she left that part of the country. She should be very dull now that dear Elizabeth had left her, especially as her dear Marion was to leave her to-morrow.

This remark brought matters to a crisis. Elinor was sure that Marion had refused her brother's hand. Their eyes met again ; and between gratitude for the tenderness which had watched over him, and pain at this refusal, Elinor burst into a passion of tears, and sobbed violently.

Mr. Dreux half raised himself on the sofa, took his sister's hand, and looked entreatingly at her.

"Now is my time," thought Mrs. Paton, "and if these young people have anything to say to each other, they shall have an opportunity to say it."

"Elinor, my dear girl," she said, soothingly, "don't distress your brother ; pray try to command your feelings."

Of course, Elinor could not command herself. Marion, trembling, rose and came up to her. She took her other hand, bent over her as she sat, and kissed her forehead.

"Marion, I am not ungrateful," said Elinor, whispering ; and withdrawing her hand from her brother, she held Marion closely.

Low as the answer was, it reached his ears. "You mistake if you think there is anything to be grateful for."

These words were commonplace, yet they confirmed Elinor's conviction, and renewed her pain. She released Marion, turned from her, and wept more hysterically than ever.

"This will never do," said the politic Mrs. Paton, and taking Elinor's hand, she said, kindly, "Come,

my love, I think we should do well to take a turn in the garden till you are calmer ; indeed, your brother should not be disturbed."

Elinor gladly yielded, and there was nothing for it but for Marion to remain. She saw Mr. Dreux about to rise and bring her a chair,—about to make the attempt rather, for this little scene had very much agitated him. She made a gesture to prevent it, and sat down near the couch, her heart beating so painfully that she could scarcely distinguish the first few sentences he addressed to her. He continued to repeat, in an altered voice, which faltered a little, his sense of her goodness, which, he said, could never be repaid, and which in all probability had saved his life.

Marion ventured to lift up her face, and encountered his eyes, but the change she saw there took from her what little courage his voice had left her ; they were hollow, and had lost much of their brightness. His forehead was still slightly discoloured ; there was a very small scar under the hair ; she knew precisely its situation ; apparently it was healed. His face, owing to a somewhat dark complexion, was not very pale, but it was thin and wasted. As she glanced at his altered lineaments, they were suddenly illuminated by that rare smile ; its sweetness and beauty made the change in them the more conspicuous, but in passing away it left the traces of suffering, both mental and bodily, more distinct and plain.

Marion tried to find some reply to his acknowledgments. Her confusion was obvious; and as she sat before him, modestly silent, he showed the interpretation *he* put upon her behaviour by saying,—

“Do not fear, Miss Greyson, that I can so forget myself as to try to make the obligation under which you have laid me a plea on which to urge my former suit. I do not say that if this had never happened I might have refrained from further appeals, even though ultimate success was scarcely to be thought of, or hoped for. But though I can scarcely suppose it possible that I could ever have ceased to love you, how much less now that—”

Marion looked up when he said this, and he paused, but perhaps it was more from agitation and the effects of his illness than anything else, for he proceeded, quite unconsciously, to drive his blunder home.

“But I have no right to disturb you by any allusions which point to you as being the cause of pain, however innocently. I wished only to remind you that I have now, from another cause, a full right—one which you will recognise—to think of you. This emboldens me to ask if you will permit me to retain something of yours which is now in my possession; it would be an inexpressible pleasure to me to have it. I believe I have seen you wear it.”

He took from his waistcoat-pocket a ring with hair in it, and explained that a few days after his

accident it was found in the saucer of a china cup, which had been set aside in a cupboard.

Marion instantly remembered having taken it off; it was in her way; but how it had happened to be set aside thus, and forgotten by her, she could not tell.

"If you could possibly permit me to retain it, Miss Greyson?"

Marion looked at him, quite surprised, and did not know what to say in reply. She could not help thinking this was rather a curious way of relinquishing all further claim,—all further attempts to found one.

It was a ring that she was always in the habit of wearing; it had been worn by her mother, and contained some of that beloved parent's hair, and some of her own hair when she was a child.

"If you would permit me to retain it," Mr. Dreux proceeded, "I would found no false hopes on the gift; I would look on it only as a memorial of *that* day."

Marion had put on the ring, but he still kept urging her to return it, exhibiting in his manner a good deal of that nervous sensibility so common in recovery from severe illness.

"If you would only let me have it, Miss Greyson," he said at last, "I would look on the gift in any light you might choose to indicate."

The voices of Mrs. Paton and Elinor were heard approaching. Marion drew off the ring, and giving

it back, said, "I ask you, then, to consider it simply as a proof that I do not like to refuse you anything for which you wish so earnestly."

If he had had his wits about him, he could surely have made something of this. As it was, he took the ring gratefully, raised her hand to his lips, and easily allowed her to withdraw it, while he tried, without much success, to control his excited feelings, which, in his present state of weakness, were often on the point of mastering him.

Mrs. Paton entered with Elinor, only to take leave, she said, and bring Marion away, which she did at once, without observing the look of unutterable regret with which his eyes followed Marion as she left the room.

Elinor and Marion took an affectionate leave of each other; and Dora, who was quite tired of sitting in the carriage, telegraphed several questions to her mother during the ride home, but could not make much of the answering signs.

And now the cottage began to get very dull. The letters came to it irregularly; sometimes the newspapers were forgotten. Vague rumours reached it, however,—wafted by chance callers,—that Pelham's church and parishioners were getting into a state of anarchy and confusion; that the churchwardens' meeting had been a stormy one; a window which was out of repair was being mended after a barbarous fashion; some peculiar ornaments thereto pertaining were under the hands of a modern glazier: now this

window was dear to the heart's core of the Curate of Pelham's church ; it was of far more ancient date than the edifice itself, and had been removed to it at considerable cost ; it was one of those rare and curious specimens of early art called a "Jesse window." These various circumstances made it quite impossible to stay much longer. Accordingly Dr. Grainger, with a very bad grace, gave his patient leave to go home, on condition that he would be extremely quiet for some time to come,—not think of preaching, go to no meetings, and amuse himself as much as he liked in superintending the repairs of his Jesse window. His patient kept to the letter of their agreement, but contrived, notwithstanding, to get himself so tired by the evening of each day that he could not creep up stairs to his library sofa without the help of his servant's arm. Many were Dr. Grainger's warnings and threatenings, but they were of small avail ; and day by day, as his natural strength and sound constitution triumphed, the old gentleman gave them up. He saw that it was no more use trying to persuade him to be quiet, and let things take their course, than it would have been to try to make Hercules (supposing that worthy had been living) lie on a sofa all day, and read fashionable novels !

Elinor's aunt now began to get very urgent with him to let her return. It was only by repeated representations of how ill he had been that he had induced her to spare his sister so long ; now he was

resolved, if possible, to retain her for a short time longer. Her spirits were often oppressed; she began to suffer from anxiety at Allerton's protracted absence,—not that she seemed to expect any renewal of intercourse, but he had gone on a journey, and as no one seemed to know anything of his whereabouts, she had a vague fear lest some evil should have befallen him.

The same feeling haunted her brother's mind. One of his first visits was to Mr. Hewly, but here he could get no further information than that Allerton, having been unwell, had made up his mind to take a tour in Wales.

Mr. Hewly could not tell how a letter ought to be addressed to him; could not say whether he were yet in Wales; had, in fact, thought of calling on Mr. Dreux for information, not doubting that *he* knew everything about his movements.

He was so evidently surprised at this proof that he knew nothing about him as to put Dreux on his guard, and make him give up all hope of a communication in that quarter.

He took leave, and called on Allerton's banker, but there he heard nothing encouraging. Allerton, he said, had taken a sum of money with him, quite sufficient to last a long time, and had not written to be supplied with any more, nor said anything as to the length of his intended absence.

These questions had to be asked with caution, lest they should injure Allerton, or in any way

compromise him. The information they elicited only added to his anxiety. He thought it very strange that he should have no correspondent at Westport.

At last, one day when he came in, Elinor told him that Mr. Hewly had called for a few minutes, and had said he had received a letter from his Rector respecting some arrangements in the church; that he was still in Wales, and well in health, or, at least, had said nothing to the contrary.

Though very tired, he forthwith went to Mr. Hewly, but could obtain no further information. That gentleman was now confirmed in his former suspicion, that they were no longer friends;—the very circumstance that Allerton had *still* not written fully proved it.

Hewly was glad at heart. He saw that the influence he had so greatly disliked was withdrawn. He received his visitor coolly, spoke of his call with condescending suavity, was sorry he could not give Mr. Dreux the address, believed he must have inadvertently destroyed the envelop, so that the post-mark could not be produced.

In reply to the question, whether he expected to hear again, he replied, that though no doubt Mr. Allerton was very much engaged, he could find time to write to his friends if he chose; *consequently*, he had no doubt he should hear again, the more so as Allerton had requested him to pay all bills and demands upon him, that he might not

have the trouble of attending to them where he was.

This was enough. Mr. Dreux saw that the address was purposely concealed from him, and believed it was at Allerton's own request. He arose to take leave, keenly conscious of the secret pleasure the Curate felt in letting him see that he knew the strong bond which had bound them together was broken.

When he came in, Elinor questioned him, and he admitted that he had failed in obtaining the address.

She was evidently distressed, and he began to fear that her feeling of preference for his late friend was not of so transient a nature as during his illness he had flattered himself that it might be.

"At any rate, my dear Elinor, we now know that Allerton is safe and well. I really had begun to have my fears. Now they are relieved, and the rest we must leave."

He was very tired with his day's work, and lay down on the sofa to rest. Elinor came and sat by him. Whenever she saw him fatigued, or looking ill, she forgot her own anxieties for a while.

She began to tell him about his habit of over-exerting himself, and entreated him to be as quiet as he could when she had returned to her aunt.

"I am not exerting myself too much," he replied; "and I believe, if my mind were at ease, I should soon be as strong as ever. I want Aller-

ton's society more than I can describe. It pains me very much—inexpressibly, sometimes—that he should think of me, meanly too. And I am uneasy about you, Elinor. I feel that my want of observation and my imprudence has cost you, for the present at least, your peace of mind, and it has removed Allerton from my influence, which I fondly hoped was for his good.”

Elinor replied, like a woman, that though her intercourse with Mr. Allerton had certainly been the cause of her present unhappiness, she would not wish to be restored to peace of mind by forgetfulness of him. “I know I shall never see him again,” she added, “but at least I can pray for him; and, Arthur, since I cannot cease to think of him, I hope, when you write, you will always tell me all you hear of him. I knew, when I gave him up, that I was doing right, but I did not know, dearest, how strong the hope, indeed the belief, was in my heart that it would lead to a change. I had, almost unknown to myself, a kind of superstitious expectation which swayed me and buoyed me up,—an idea that I should surely never be the worse for that sacrifice.”

“Nor do you think so now. You do not regret?”

“No: but what I thought simple submission and faith in God was really superstition; at least some such feeling was mingled with the others. The

feeling clung to me that he was certainly to be restored to me, better than he was before."

"Because you had made that sacrifice?"

"I don't quite know,—I incline to think so."

"My dear, we all have a great many of these unacknowledged superstitions, and, as long as it can, the heart will cling to the idea;—no, I mean the sensation—impression,—(instinct I would call it, if it were not false,)—that obedience to the will of God is to be rewarded by the prospering of our wishes in this world. I hope, whatever painful thoughts you may have, you do not *really* regret what you have done. The command is so plain: 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' You believe God has called you out of darkness into light. You have heard Allerton say many times that such a call does not exist. And however highly you may think of his many estimable and most amiable qualities, you cannot suppose that he has experienced the change he contemns."

"No," said Elinor, "and I must not regret it; I cannot, and—I do not."

"You have obeyed the dictates of conscience, and we must leave the rest with God."

Elinor was silent for a while. Then she said, "Mr. Allerton never said but one thing to me which inspired me,—or has done since, with the slightest doubt."

"What was it, my dear?"

"You remember that text: 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?' We were walking in the garden one day with Mr. Allerton; I think you had alluded to the necessity of a change of heart, and I remember you spoke of the Holy Spirit's influence. After some time you left us, and went up into the library to fetch a book that he had asked for. As you ran up the verandah-steps, Mr. Allerton looked after you, and slowly repeated that text to me. He smiled when he had finished, and asked me whether his affection was not a proof that he was one of the brethren? We had then been acquainted a very short time, but it disturbed me to hear him talk so lightly. I said, 'I know you have a great affection for my brother.' He laughed, and said something about the two people he loved most on earth being both of 'your sort,' as he generally called it. And there was something in his manner which pressed the conviction upon me, that he meant me to believe myself one of those two. But I put that aside, and answered, 'I think we should inquire, when we love "the brethren," whether we do so because we believe them to be such, or *in spite* of our belief that they are such.' 'Ah,' he said, 'you all talk alike. That very thing Dreux said to me himself when I was talking on that subject once. But there is nothing of the kind in the holy Scriptures to which he is everlastingly referring: it there simply specifies, "*Because* we love the brethren."

"My dear, he did come once, at midnight; don't you remember my telling you of it?"

"Yes, Arthur; but I am sure that was only a delirious fancy of yours. He never did come, or I should have surely heard something of it."

"I feel convinced he *did* come, Elinor; but in proportion as I return to health my recollections of the interview become more vague. You feel convinced he did not? Well, I can oppose no reason to that—nothing but my own contrary conviction."

Elinor sighed, and wished he might be right. Her brother had never told her anything of his interview with Allerton on the morning of his accident. She was afraid, almost certain, that they had quarrelled, and nothing but the fear of having this confirmed prevented her from asking the question.

It was not without deep regret and many tears that Elinor prevailed on herself to part with her brother, for she saw he was still far from strong, and since this last illness, was much more sensitive than before, and not so well able to cope with difficulty and annoyance. She even urged him to write to her aunt, and beg her to let the winter be passed with him; but as this relative had brought her up, and always made much of her, he did not like to do that, though he was far more unwilling to part with her than he had ever been before.

Elinor accepted this as a sufficient reason for

letting her go. There was a vague report floating about Westport which might have supplied her with another reason. Her ears were, however, the last that it was likely to reach, and she stayed the time out in peace, leaving him at last surrounded with comforts and with assiduous servants.

She saw he was depressed. She knew of one cause, and there was, or might be, another which had never been mentioned between them, but such a thing as pecuniary anxiety never occurred to her as likely to reach him,—he had an ample income, and had been born and bred in elegance and competence.

On the morning of her departure they were walking in the garden. He was absent and depressed. She was going to leave him, and with her departure another evil seemed to draw nearer and take a more distinct outline.

She was begging him to have a certain passion-flower differently trained. If the branches were supported, she said, they would cover the trellis-work of the verandah, and climb over the roof.

“By next summer, when I come, it would be a complete canopy, Arthur.”

Her brother sighed, but at her request he spoke to the gardener about it. She occupied herself for a while with twining the most luxurious branches over the woodwork.

“Now we shall see,” she continued, “that by next spring it will look beautifully.”

“ Shall we see ? ” he answered, in a tone of regret, but observing that it pained her, he went on more cheerfully : “ well, at any rate the plant is worth training, and I have no doubt, as you say, Elinor, it will be beautiful next summer.”

“ Yes, my dear Arthur ; and then you can go up and down under a complete canopy.”

She remembered afterwards the expression of his face when she said this, but he made no reply, and went on twisting the passion-flower through the railings ; and at last he permitted her to leave his house, gave her the last kiss, and shut her into her aunt’s carriage, with her maid, without allowing her to suppose he had any further causes for depression than those she knew of.

CHAPTER XVII.

ABOUT A HEDGE AND A HAYSTACK.

SINCE Elizabeth's wedding, Marion and Dora had been more together than during all the previous weeks which had been spent by the latter in her uncle's house.

When Marion returned from the cottage, the effects of anxiety began to show themselves, and for two or three days she was very unwell—obliged to keep her room. She was with difficulty able to appear at the church as bridesmaid, and after that she required rest and quiet.


“And where,” she asked, “was Frank Maidley?”

“Oh,” Dora said, “he had been sent for in a great hurry on the very afternoon of Mr. Dreux's accident to come and see his aunt—she was dying.” “Had he been heard from since?” Marion asked. Dora trifled with her watch-chain, but made no answer. She had seemed happy, that is, cheerful, enough the past few days, but she was restless; it was a pleasure to find some one on whom she could lavish kindness and attention. Marion naturally

came under her superintendence, and both nurse and patient were all the better for the companionship.

Dora wanted a *confidante*, at least, some one to whom she could tell all that had passed about Mr. Hewly, and how she had quarrelled with Helen, and what she supposed were the intentions of her former lover with regard to that young lady. That there was anything further to tell no one could have guessed from the conversations of the two girls. Dora was very anxious to set the matter in such a light to Marion that she might be quite sure she never had loved Mr. Hewly, only "felt flattered by his politeness," as she phrased it. Even that seemed remarkable; and there was an evident reason for this confidence,—it was that she might excuse herself from all inconstancy, and that Marion might excuse her to others, should she at any future day (which day, perhaps, she thought near at hand) engage herself to another. The name of this said "other" was never mentioned or hinted at; the one was too delicate, the other too discreet, for that.

After several conversations Marion asked Dora if she would return with her to Swanstead. Mr. Raeburn had desired she would invite one of her cousins to stay with her. She had wished to have Rosina, and had planned in her own mind that she would go on with her lessons if any difficulty was made in allowing her to come; but Dora having mentioned how very much she wished to be away



from Westport for a time, she did not hesitate to give up this cherished wish, and pressed Dora to come and stay the winter at Swanstead, in which she was so warmly seconded by Mr. Raeburn that Dora gladly consented,—partly, no doubt, for the pleasure of her cousin's society; partly that she might get away from the scene of that little episode in her life which she so much disliked to think of; and partly,—who knows?—that she might be in the neighbourhood where Frank Maidley would spend the Christmas vacation, which would be, she could not but know, with his parents.

Mrs. Paton gladly spared Dora, and the day after the visit to the cottage, when many affectionate things had been said on both sides, Mr. Raeburn set off to take the two girls back to Swanstead.

They arrived on the afternoon of the next day, several hours having been occupied in seeing a cathedral which lay in their route.

Mr. Raeburn was delighted to see Marion's joy on returning home; she had been so pensive for several days past that he had feared this visit to her cousins would make the old rectory look lonely and dull.

Marion, however, was almost childish in her delight; she ran over the house and garden with the interest of a person who had been away for years. "Everything looks just the same," she said, with a happy smile; "I was afraid it would be altered."


“What, the house, my dear, and the garden? Did you expect to find them altered?”

“Not exactly; but I scarcely thought they would seem to welcome me home so pleasantly, just as if I had never been away. It has always seemed as if the little gap I used to occupy must have been filled before I returned,—no one is missed long. Dear uncle, I have had so many untrusting thoughts even of you. I have thought, ‘Now that I am away he must discover how little I ever do to make him happy,—how little consequence I am in his world.’ In fact, you know, uncle, I can really do nothing for you beyond loving you.”

“Perhaps, my dear, you have not quite understood that it is something as needful to the happiness of the human mind to be able to bestow kindness, protection, and affection, as to receive it. Granting that you can do nothing for me to make me happy,—which, I confess, is a view of the case in which I do not quite agree,—you are still always at hand to—”

“To be made happy by you, uncle. Ah, I never thought of that!”

“Then, my dear, you must keep it in mind for the future. It is much more likely, humanly speaking, that you should forget me than that I should forget you; affection descends. Sons often forget their mothers; mothers never forget their sons. You are to me instead of a daughter; you receive from me the attention and tenderness of a father. If you



were withdrawn, my affections would be restless for want of something on which to fix themselves."

"But if I were withdrawn, uncle, do you really think I should forget you?"

"No, my dear; not soon, not quite, and not consciously; but I think some other person would soon step in to bestow a much higher degree of tenderness, and in receiving it again, would make the image of your doting old father dim and indistinct."

"Never, uncle!"

"Very well, my pretty; then you never mean to marry, and leave me?"

"Leave you?—No. Marry, perhaps; most people do."

"And what will you do with your husband?"

"Oh, I shall make him come and live with us."

"Make him!—a wifely speech, indeed. And pray what is he to do in this quiet place?"

"Can't he be your curate?"

"Curate! Why we get on fast. He's not an abstraction, then; he's a real man, this husband, and in orders! Well—"

"Dear uncle!"


Mr. Raeburn laughed, first gently, and then as if he felt an exquisite appreciation of the joke,—the best of men now and then take a delight in teasing girls. Marion made protestations,—he only laughed the more; she begged, she entreated; her eyes filled with tears. At last he left off; she had the art to remind him that she had not yet been to see Mrs.

Raeburn, and that always made the lonely Rector quiet and sad.

Mrs. Raeburn the elder was gone to spend a year with her married daughter in the Highlands, so Marion and Dora had the house to themselves, and very cheerful they made it with their practising and laughter, more especially as Mr. Raeburn thought, by their manner of running up and down stairs, to which he had a particular pleasure in listening, as well as to the little scraps of tunes sung the while. They were careless creatures, as the happy often are; and, as they generally left part of the things they went up for behind them, in the shape of skeins of silk, netting-needles, bits of lace, or cotton-reels, he had this pleasure a great many times during the morning. He often, now, wrote and read with his study-door partially open, for he was extremely fond of everything cheerful, youthful, and lifelike.

Dora and Marion were excessively anxious for all sorts of news from Westport, and had charged Wilfred to write them a true and detailed account of all that transpired. Their first packet of letters inclosed a note which Mrs. Paton had received from her daughter, saying how much she enjoyed her tour, and demonstrating the fact, that the young matron was trying very hard to assume a wifelike dignity and a certain staidness of style, as well as moderation in the use of epithets.

The letter was a good one, but stiff; it did



not even remind them of Elizabeth, who had been celebrated in her little world for her exaggerated language. Everything with her was either dreadful, exquisite, horrible, enchanting, or inconceivable.

The next letter was from Wilfred, and contained so much family news that we shall give it entire :—

“ My beloved Marion, and my dear Dora,—

“ As I know you always show your letters to each other I shall write one long one to you both, instead of two short ones in separate envelopes.


“ Mr. Dreux is much better ; I saw him yesterday. Mr. What’s-his-name Brown and his ma’ were calling. Mr. Dreux was very polite to the old lady, and thanked her for coming to see him. Mrs. Brown described to Miss Dreux her feelings when she heard of the accident, and declared that Athanasius ‘cried like a child.’ For my part, Miss Dreux and Mr. Greyson, the first words I said were,—‘ Why, if that excellent gentleman is to lie on the brinks of Jordan’s flood, what’s to become of the poor? and who will attend to their perishing offsprings?’ ” I looked at Mr. Dreux,—he didn’t laugh at all ; his sister did. He asked me if we had heard of your safe arrival, and desired to be remembered to you both. Miss Dreux sent her love, and she is going to write soon. After this Mr. D. walked round the garden, leaning on my arm ; he seems to consider himself quite well, only a little weak. He has a tight ring on his little finger, which reminded me a little of a ring Marion

used to wear; it certainly was something like it, perhaps rather more valuable; but the value of a thing is in the owner's opinion of it, more than its price in a shop, and comparisons are odious."

Dora, who was reading aloud, stopped here, and said, "What *does* he mean? He always puts all sorts of odd things into his letters." She read the passage over again, and, as Marion said nothing to explain it, went on:—

"I go down the London-road now almost every day, and generally pay my respects to my Aunt Ferguson. You know it is such a pleasing trait in the character of a young man to be attentive to his elders. Besides, by the time I get to the house I am almost always hungry, and, as I naturally wish to show Helen that I don't bear her any malice for calling me an 'impertinent boy,' I go smiling into her father's house, and there eat some bread and cheese.

"You know those meadows at the back of the house? The pond there is capital for moths. I often go prowling about there. My aunt compliments me very much on my industry. The other day she said she knew there were very often beautiful dragon flies there. 'Then why don't you go sometimes and look at them, aunt?' I said. 'Oh, my dear, I'm afraid of treading on some slimy grub or craunching some snail that might be hiding there.' 'Exactly so,' I said, 'and then there would be an end of all his schemes for ever, and all the tender flutterings of his insect



thorax (which means breast). How afflicting to think of his widowed mate drooping her head ever after in the shadow of the arbour, and he never coming back to whisper to her behind the haystack.'


" 'What stuff that boy does talk ! ' said Mr. Ferguson, and Helen coloured to the eyes ; for you must know, my dear Marion and Dora, that the evening before that I was in the meadows with my butterfly-net, lying in wait behind an oak for a certain humming-bird sphynx which had jilted me the day before (such a beauty she is, I've got her). All on a sudden I thought I heard some one near me in the meadow give a cough ; so I went softly towards the place,—for you know I could not tell but that it might be a fellow-creature in distress. There are two haystacks close to the hedge, and when I had looked well about them twice and seen nothing, I was disgusted with myself for my suspicions, and said aloud (for unluckily I have contracted a horrid habit of talking to myself), ' Now, W. G., I hope you see your mistake. It was the pony who coughed ; there's nothing clerical in this neighbourhood, my dear boy, so you'd better walk off, and learn to be less suspicious in future.' I had scarcely said this, when I heard a loud, violent sneeze, so near me that it made me jump and drop my butterfly-net. The thing sneezed again twice, evidently against its will. I walked quickly up to the hedge, and there, jammed in between the hedge and the stack, stood Mr. Hewly, with his arms, as it

were, pinned to his sides, and his face gazing at me with its usual solemn, earnest expression. The thorns must have pricked him very much, and no doubt that helped to make him look melancholy. 'Good gracious, Mr. Hewly,' I said, 'how happy I am to have found you! How did you get into that unpleasant position? Can I help you out?' 'Thank you,' he said, his face subsiding into a miserable smile, 'I—I don't particularly mind it; it's—it's not at all unpleasant, Mr. Greyson.' (Of course he had worked himself in there to hide from me.) 'Shall I call somebody to help?' I said; shall I see if I can find Mr. Ferguson?' 'O no, thank you, Mr. Greyson. O dear no,' he said, forcing himself out, and scratching his face and hands very much. The instant he was out I climbed up a small elm, growing on the hedge, and there in the arbour sat Helen, looking unutterable things. I did not say a word to her, but merely remarked to Mr. Hewly that it was fine weather for the late crops, and went home."

Dora and Marion paused, and laughed heartily when they came to this place.

"How I could ever have suffered that man to walk beside me and talk his nonsense I really cannot think," said Dora. "Wilfred certainly spares no pains to make him ridiculous in my eyes, and I think, even if I *had* loved him, what he has told me to-day would have worked a cure."

"Do you really think Helen will accept him?" asked Marion.



"Oh, I am sure of it; and as she is of age her father cannot prevent their marrying."

"But he can forbid it and say he disapproves."

"Ah, Helen will not much mind that, and Mr. Ferguson has always indulged her to such a degree that he will be obliged to give in; he is proud, though, and he will feel most the idea that Hewly is the son of a butcher."

Dora went on reading:—"The next day my uncle told me that Mr. Ferguson had been with him—in a great passion he seemed—and told him it had been hinted to him by an acquaintance that Mr. Hewly—a man he did not know even by sight—was trying to make an impression on his daughter. My uncle says he told him several things that he happened to know about Hewly (of course keeping one particular thing to himself). He told me Mr. Ferguson was coming again in the evening, and that he wished to see me, for he knew I was acquainted with Hewly.

"So in the evening I saw him. I was cautious what I said, for fear he should wonder what interest I could have in watching him. He then asked why I had not told him before. I replied that as he allowed Helen to go to St. Bernard's, and knew that she constantly consulted the clergyman there on religious subjects, I had no right to suppose that he disapproved of him, though I *had* certainly thought he could not be aware of what was going forward.

"Disapprove," he retorted; "why, I know nothing

about the man,—never saw him in my life ; besides, I may think a man very proper to instruct my daughter in her religious duties, and yet most improper to be my son-in-law.’

“ Well, he put himself into a pretty pet, and went away, declaring he would soon put a stop to the stupid affair. If he does, or if he can, I shall be very much surprised.”

After this followed various matters connected with the writer’s amusements and studies, and then the letter concluded with a promise to write again soon, and give a particular account of how matters were progressing.

It was remarkable that from that day Dora gave up her last lingering preference for the peculiar religious opinions that Hewly had taught her. Yet her cousin had never mentioned the subject of religion ; he had merely set the man before her in a mean and ridiculous light, and he went down and all his dogmas with him.

And now autumn advanced, Dora was by no means idle, but entered heart and soul into all the plans for the good of the poor which had been set on foot at Swanstead, while the visiting in the neighbourhood and the letters from home served to enliven the country rectory and make the time pass pleasantly away.

She and Marion wrote frequently to Westport, and chided their correspondents for not entering more into details in their descriptions of what was

going on at home. Accordingly after this came a letter from Wilfred, full of circumstantial matters which entertained them very much :—

“My dearest Marion and Dora,— What you mean by saying we don’t enter into details I can’t think. Rosina and I wrote a long letter together about a week ago, in which we told you how we went to dine with Elizabeth and Fred after their return. How we had a melted ice pudding on the occasion and some very cinnamonny blancmanges. And didn’t we mention that Elizabeth was quite grave, and tried to seem old and formal, but couldn’t? Of course we did. And after that we told you how my uncle had got a whitlow on his thumb. And then Rosina told Marion how one of her Sunday school-girls had come to church in curl-papers, a cap full of bows of blue ribbon, and an old green veil. I looked over her and saw her write it. The girl’s name was Clementina Clump. Don’t you call all that details? What would you desire? But to proceed. The Fergusons gave a grand dinner-party the other day, and Mr. Hewly was there. I will tell you how that was. Mr. Ferguson came into the study while Frank and I were busy with our crucibles. He told us Hewly had got an introduction to him, and had been so excessively, so blandly polite during his call, that he had not been able to treat him otherwise than courteously, *which he regretted*. Frank then said, ‘I wish, Sir, you’d invite him to dinner.’ (Frank knows all about the

affair, he's always at the Fergusons'.) 'I am sure the more Miss F. sees him in ordinary life, the less she will like him. So invite him, and me to meet him.' Only think of the old fellow's consulting two young men like us ! Well, he said he would, and the day before yesterday we went. The party was in honour of the bride and bridegroom. Elizabeth wore her wedding dress of white satin. I never saw her look so well. She was evidently trying not to be in her usual high spirits, but to seem indifferent and tranquil. At first it did very well. She was a very elegant, distinguished kind of bride, but in the middle of dinner she forgot herself, and laughed heartily, for Frank and I drew Mr. Hewly out in a way that does one good to think of. You know he is always a very grave man, and as he was desirous that day to be agreeable, he was then intensely so.

"The solemnity with which he asked Helen to take wine was glorious ; the earnest *empressement* he imparted to his great black eyes, when he inquired whether she preferred the liver or the gizzard-wing, was something delicious to behold ; the sombre gravity with which he besought her to take some woodcock almost petrified her,—there was something tragic in the tone with which he assured her that 'it was excellent, and very young.'

"His helping her to cheese was perfect. He did it as if it was a matter of life and death. Some

ladies, he observed, in his slow, solemn voice, preferred the blue mould; but for his part, he agreed with Mr. Bishop (here a low bow) that the brown was better.

"All this he did himself; afterwards we helped him a little. We hoisted him on to one of his hobbies, and he rode it gloriously.

"He began to talk about himself, and extolled the practice of self-denial, in which all present could join without joking; but he went on to remark, that he always made a point of denying himself some elegant little luxury, excepting upon the festivals of the Church.

"‘Upon those days, the better to bear them in remembrance,’ he said, ‘I always drink lump sugar in my tea.’

"‘On other days, I suppose, you take moist?’ said Frank Maidley, with an expression of deferential interest.

"‘I used to do,’ he replied, flattered to be so noticed, ‘but lately I have thought it better to make a still more marked difference by abstaining altogether.’

"‘How interesting!’ said Frank, with a deep sigh.


"From one thing to another we drew him. He felt himself a lion, a person of interest, and ‘roared’ for our entertainment ‘like any sucking dove.’ But unfortunately, just as he was opening out,

Elizabeth helping us, and Helen looking completely annoyed and ashamed, my uncle asked some question about the draining of those stupid marshes that all the gentlemen think so much of, and before we could get him round again, the ladies left the room.

"The rest of the evening Helen was excessively cool to us, but as there were several strangers present, she was partly occupied with them.

"However, I've no time for any more of this. Do you know, it is said in the town that Mr. Dreux has lost his property. I saw him yesterday,—he certainly looked out of spirits. He saw I observed it, and told me, by way of a reason, that his sister was gone, and Mr. Allerton out. It was in the evening that I called, about some gas that Frank and I want to concoct. He had promised to lend us an apparatus. He asked me to stay and drink tea with him;—he has always been extremely friendly to me since his accident. I think there must be some truth in these reports, for he told me he was going to London in a day or two on business, and probably should not be home for a fortnight. He asked me to re-direct his letters for him to an address in London.

"After tea he got me to play to him on the piano, while he lay on the sofa. He asked by turns for almost all Marion's favourite songs, and I played them for him with variations.



"I suppose we did tell you that he is come home.

"Well, they all send their love.

"And with mine to my Uncle Raeburn,

"Believe me ever,

"Your affectionate brother and cousin,

"WILFRED GREYSON."

Here followed a postscript to the said "Uncle Raeburn." So the letter was carried to him, with permission to read it all, for he had been sufficiently enlightened on certain points not to see any mystery in it.

"Poor Mr. Dreux!" said Marion;—"I hope it is not true that he has lost his property, or is about to lose it; he does so much good with it in the town."

Dora said nothing. She was occupied in wondering whether Helen would overlook the absurdities of her admirer, and whether Mr. Ferguson would suffer the affair to proceed. After that she sat down and wrote to Wilfred, desiring still further details, and then she and Marion prepared to receive some visitors.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PUPIL.

Two days after Elinor's departure her brother went to London, and then the reports before mentioned began to take shape and distinctness.

It was said that his absence was in consequence of the failure of a certain banking-house in town; that all his property was in the hands of one of the partners, not precisely what would be called capital in the business, but so involved with this gentleman's concerns, owing to his own carelessness, or some informality, or, perhaps, the ignorance and temerity which make some men always certain of their own success, that his downfall would be Mr. Dreux's ruin.

Some people would not believe that a man of sense and undoubted talent would have left his property so insecure, or the whole of it in the hands of one house;—it was absurd, an unusual proceeding. At last they went to his lawyer, and being met with a shrug of the shoulders, the rumour went forward triumphantly. Then all his acquaintance

said, "Why hadn't he bought an estate?" excepting those who said, "Why hadn't he invested it in the funds? It was excessively foolish!—wonderfully imprudent!"

Most people said he would now certainly give up his curacy, for it was not to be expected that he should continue to live in the town in such different style to what he had always been accustomed. (On the contrary, others sagely argued that it would be grossly imprudent to leave a place where he was so popular, and where he had so good a chance of succeeding his present poor childish old Rector.

At the end of a fortnight Mr. Dreux came home. He looked harassed, but not otherwise altered. He found his library-table covered with tradesmen's bills, though it still wanted two months to Christmas. By way of paying them, as well as meeting all other demands upon him, he advertised his house and furniture to be sold, and set to work to consider his position.

He had lost everything. His curacy brought him in a hundred a-year, and a lectureship in the afternoon, not connected with it, though in the same church, about forty more. This lectureship was his for life, if he chose to hold it.

This was his whole maintenance, and seemed a miserable pittance to a man who had been accustomed to spend from eight hundred to a thousand a-year, and knew absolutely nothing of economy.

His house was of a good size, and very hand-
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somely furnished; for when he came to the town he had given orders to an upholsterer to furnish it *properly*. The bills came to a good deal more than he had expected, but he supposed they were all right; and with the same good faith he had listened to his housekeeper, gardener, and groom, suffering them to carry out their notions of what was proper, and supposing, that, as the matters under discussion were such as belonged to their respective departments, they ought to know more about them than he did.

He was a man of so careless a nature as regarded money, that it was not so much what he spent upon himself that made the items mount up in the account (for his personal habits were simple and inexpensive enough), but what he gave away, and threw away, on unworthy objects and useless, thoughtless charity. He supplied his Sunday and infant schools with three times as many books, slates, maps, and pictures as were needful, not considering the undoubted fact, that great abundance almost inevitably leads to waste. As he paid for them all himself, mistresses and scholars never spared. When they were out of any article there was no meddling, scrutinizing committee to interfere,—they had only to send to him for more. They accounted him a *real* gentleman,—he bowed to each mistress as if she had been a lady. If, when he was present, the school-room fire wanted mending, he did not allow the females to lift the heavy coal-pans, but mended the fires himself; consequently,

of course, they would not knowingly and willingly have wronged him—of course they repaid this respect and consideration with interest a thousand fold. He could not have been more implicitly obeyed if he had been an autocrat. Nevertheless, they used twice as many articles connected with their craft as any other school-mistresses, and though they would have risked their lives to serve him, they remorselessly wasted *his* pens, ink, copy-books, slates, coals, and “kindling.”

He was a charming master to his servants, for he was no trouble to please in his own house, and he looked over the household accounts in such a careless fashion, that he might just as well have let it alone. He never asked any awkward questions, seemed oblivious of cold joints, was very unobservant of the disappearance of old clothes, and would often leave about a good deal of loose money.

He now resolved to give up his house, sell his furniture, his horse, and all his effects, excepting his books, and go into lodgings. Several other curates in the town lived very comfortably on as small a sum as he should now possess, he argued, and why could not he?

But he quite forgot that these several other curates had been brought up in the country on small means, had been allowed at college only just enough to carry them through respectably, and were thoroughly used to economy. Besides, he never calculated on the difficulty of retrenching

in his charities. It was comparatively easy to deny himself,—he would walk instead of riding, he would leave off buying the expensive books, the reviews, and periodicals with which he had been accustomed to load his tables; he would take no more tours, he would not keep servants. This he thought and found easy, but it was extremely hard, most bitter to his feelings, to be obliged, in common honesty to his tradesmen, to give up his subscriptions to many of those charities in the town of which he had hitherto been one of the chief supporters—it grated upon his feelings to be obliged to refuse money to some among the poor to whom he had been most generous—it pained him to the quick to hear the ill-suppressed murmurs of those to whom he had hitherto made a weekly allowance, and whose behaviour now seemed almost a reproach to him for having led them to expect it, as if the years of comparative comfort they had derived from it had better never have been enjoyed than that they should be so suddenly deprived of it.

He took small apartments in the town, near the church, and moved to them the books that he had in constant use, his wardrobe, his family plate, and one family picture. Then he went back to his old house to make arrangements about his papers, and to go over the different rooms with the broker, who was making out a catalogue of everything preparatory to a sale.

"And these books, Sir," asked the man, "what is to be done with them?"

"Oh, I cannot think of parting with my books!" He might have added, "They are all I have to look forward to for interest and relaxation."

"Very good, Sir; then where are they to go?"

"To my rooms, of course."

"Sir, you don't consider the size of that little parlour; it's not a third as large as this library, and, besides, you have a book-case in one of the bed-rooms."

"I cannot possibly get on without my books," said Dreux, quite dismayed.

As he did not seem to know what to do, the man said, "Perhaps, Sir, you would not object to hiring a good large room? they would all go into one room, I think, if they were properly arranged."

"No, I cannot do that."

"Well, then, suppose we were to step on and measure the lodgings, Sir. Perhaps one or two of these book-cases might stand in it."

The measurement was effected: not one of the book-cases would stand in either the bed-room or sitting-room,—if it was set against the chimney-piece it blocked up the bed-room door, if against the opposite wall, it blocked up the window.

"Well, leave this room for the present," said the owner; "I will see what can be done when the sale is over."

The sale of household furniture, &c., was effected

a few days after ; it did not realize nearly so much as he had expected—absolutely not enough to pay all his bills.

He was standing in the empty library of his old house, all the furniture of which was gone, the very book-cases sold, and the books left in heaps on the floor.

He was thinking with dismay at the sum brought in by the sale, when the man who had valued the furniture, said, in a careless way, "Colonel Masterman came to see the house the day before the sale, and spent a long while looking over the books. He said they were a capital collection, and seemed quite disappointed when I told him they were not for sale. I told him, Sir, you wouldn't part with your books on any account. He said he had understood the contrary, and would have taken them at a valuation. He's building a library, you know, Sir."

Dreux had sent some fifty or sixty volumes to his new abode. They filled two small shelves in his parlour. He now selected about half a dozen more, which had been great favourites, sat down and wrote to Colonel Masterman that he had altered his mind, and wished to part with his library.

The next few days he was very busy, and did not feel the want of them much. The transfer was easily effected,—and having now no servant to send on his errands, he walked himself to pay the

remaining bills, and brought home exactly twelve pounds as the residue of his property. He was very tired, and threw himself on the couch in his little parlour, surprised and vexed to find that day by day he felt the loss of his property more and more.

And then came to light by degrees various things connected with his past charities, which made *them* no longer pleasant things to reflect on.

He had no intimates, and he unburdened his mind to none of his fellow-labourers in the town, though very friendly with them. Yet he did hint to one or two that he suffered from the importunities of the poor; it gave him great pain to deny them, and he did not hide it. Thereupon, by way of consolation, followed a long list of instances, which seemed to multiply at will, of how he had been cheated and imposed upon by the recipients of his bounty—how the beggars, trusting to his well-known careless generosity, had been heard to boast that they could go twice a week for a month to “Saint Plum’s,” and each time with a different story—that he always gave them something or other, and being in a great hurry, seldom either listened, or looked at them. “Oh, he’s the real gentleman; he wants no certificates.” “He was a deep one when he liked, but had an absent way with him; and if a woman had but the sense to bring a squalling baby with her, he was took quite aback, and seemed as if he’d give anything to be rid of her.”


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These good-natured friends had never told him before how shamefully his bounty had been abused ; now they sagely observed to each other, "It was best he should know it, as it might keep him from regretting what he could no longer accomplish."

Then again, strange to say, Mr. Dreux became of far less consequence in the town than heretofore.

A short time after his loss of property a relation of his died in India, and was reported to have left him ten thousand pounds. There was no truth in the report, but it caused the poor to besiege his door again, or rather his landlady's door. "Here was a pretty parson for you!—here were fine doings, denying the poor their crust! Mr. Dreux was saving his money. His rich Huncle that had died in the Hinjies had left him as much money as filled two mackerel boats, in which it was landed, as they were told, at the post-office,—and they should hope the post-office people knew what they were talking about, and had the best of news. What a shame it was that he couldn't spare a sixpence for them that had none! He needn't hold up his head so high. He always walked like a millingitary officer. They wondered he wasn't ashamed of hisself."

Moreover, as Madame de Stael said of herself, that the men could not perceive that wit in her at forty-five which they ascribed to her at two-and-twenty, so Mr. Dreux might have said, "The people cannot perceive that eloquence in me now



I am poor that they ascribed to me when I was richer."

In his small, lonely lodgings,—Allerton and his sister away, his health not so good as usual, his mind harassed by many anxieties which he had never been accustomed to, and his books gone,—he spent the next few weeks, till autumn deepened into winter, and till, one by one, he had lost many of those distinctions which he had hitherto supposed belonged to him personally, but which he now found partly to have resulted from his property, partly from his hospitality,—the style in which he lived, and the money he gave away.

It was one consolation that Elinor was away, that she knew nothing beyond what he chose himself to tell her. She still lived in comfort and elegance, and he resolved that he would never give her one needless pain respecting him.

She knew broadly that he had lost his property, but all the harassing details were spared her. He only told her that he now had 140*l.* a-year, and that he lived in lodgings. He wrote to her once a-week, and her letters in reply were now his chief solace. He presented everything to her as cheerfully as he could. He had found it needful to give up almost all society, and her sisterly sympathy was very pleasant; it was all the sympathy offered, and all he would have endured to receive.

Of Allerton he could hear nothing, and had many an anxious hour respecting him. He could not

make a new friend. There were few persons whom he could feel to be thoroughly congenial, and though there were great and essential differences between him and the Rector of St. Bernard's, there had been such cordial regard that it fretted him more than any of his other troubles to miss his cheerful steady step, his voice,—for he had an inveterate habit of singing about the house ; chant, song, or psalm came alike to him,—even his short outbreaks of passion were a loss, and so was his influence. He was the only man who would think of such a thing as invading him in his lair (as he called the library), shutting his book, and dragging him out for a country walk ; the only man who came uninvited to breakfast, dinner, or supper, as the fit took him ; made himself at home, railed at his host for his unsociable habits, and made him both sociable and communicative. However, that was over. Allerton's continued silence seemed a proof that he still harboured resentment ; and as long as that was the case, he would wish for no renewal of intercourse, not even if he could know how acceptable it would be.

As might have been expected, though he believed himself to be very economical, he soon found that he was living beyond his income. Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone was the only person he talked to familiarly, and he notified this fact to her quite coolly one evening, when she had come in to drink tea with him.

“ And I'm sure I don't at all wonder at it,” said

the quiet old lady, without the slightest appearance of discomposure.

"Why don't you wonder at it, Mrs. D.? You ought to have gone into hysterics."

"Lie down on the sofa, Mr. Dreux; you know you're recommended to rest after the day."

"I will; why don't you wonder?"

Mrs. Dorothy had got some description of outer coat in her hand; she was turning out the pockets most unceremoniously. "Is this the coat you wear every day, Mr. Dreux? Bless us! one, two, three,—here's no less than six pairs of gloves in it; black, lilac, grey, odd ones too,—some old, and some as good as new!"

"Yes, they accumulate. I suppose Joseph used to turn them out formerly. What are you going to do? You've been stitching all the afternoon, with your pearl buttons and your strings; I like to see you here. You're not going to mend those old gloves? I won't allow it, Mrs. D."

"You won't, Sir? Well, I *am* going to mend them, sort them, smooth them, and then they'll do perfectly well to wear again. Why," proceeded the old lady, in her soft internal voice, "you spend a fortune in gloves, Mr. Dreux; no wonder you live beyond your income; and what will you do, Sir, to make up the sum you want?"

"I shall take an evening pupil."

"Ah! Will you have another cup of tea, Sir?"

"Yes, Mrs. D., and then come and sit where I can see you."

"What for, Sir?"


"Because yours is the pleasantest face in Westport, and I like to look at it."

"Well, I'm sure! Now, if I were you, I shouldn't take a pupil. I should just make it up instead with my uncle, that great gentleman,—I forget his name."

"Impossible, Mrs. Dorothy; I could not if I wished, which I do not. Do you know what we quarrelled about?"

"No, Sir."

"Well, I'll tell you. What sort of a boy do you think I was? I was the most mischievous young scape-grace that ever breathed. I had a brother once, two years my junior. I took delight in leading him and abetting him in all manner of mischief. It is a mystery to me how he came to die in his bed, which he did, of measles, when he was seven years old; but not till I had carried him pick-a-back over all the dangerous streams (half torrents) within ten miles of my father's house in Wales, and also helped him to set fire to a stack with a burning-glass, and got him run away with by a wild, half-unbroken horse. I was fond of him, used to fight his battles with the housekeeper when our parents were out; but I am certain that I endangered his life at least once a-week. Well, he died, and both my parents



died. I went to live with my uncle. At first he liked my daring habits, but my love of mischief grew, and I often got into dreadful scrapes. At last, one day I thought I should like to see how many trout there were in a large deep pond he had. I laid a plan to turn the water off to within a foot of the bottom, and thought what bliss it would be to wade about among the fish. There were two gratings, one at each end of the long pond. I first, with infinite pains, dammed up the higher one, through which a little stream ran; then I went to the lower, which allowed a regulated quantity of water to flow off into a drain. This would not do for me; I quietly set to work to dig a hole in the bank. I dug and dug till, all on a sudden, out rushed the water in headlong haste; the bank gave way, and mud, water, and I with my spade, were tumbled down into the field of standing corn. I rushed back to my dam, but I had made it a very secure one, and before I could loosen one sod, the pond was drained of every bucket of water, the corn-field flooded, and the corn full of dead fish. As many as filled a cart lay at the foot of the hole; they were carted away in the afternoon, and I after them. The pond covered nearly an acre. Well, Mrs. Dorothy, what do you think now of reconciliation?"

"How old were you then, Sir?"

"Nearly fifteen."

"Well, Sir, I shouldn't like to have had the managing of you."

"No, but I'm easily managed now,—don't you think so?"

"Pretty well, Sir, when you can't stir hand or foot! What makes you in such good spirits, Sir?"

"Your being here. I never see anything cheerful within doors now. You ought to have pity on me, and take me in hand."

"So I will, Mr. Dreux."

"For better and worse?"

"Now, Mr. Dreux, how you talk! It does me good to hear you laugh though," and the old lady stopped her needle and looked fondly at her nursling. He was rather a large one for such a frail little nurse; yet, as he stretched his six-foot limbs on the couch, he looked at her with a kind of smile which seemed in some sort to express dependance on her, for at least the present hour's tranquillity and good spirits.

A pupil was soon found in the person of young Greyson. He was to go to Cambridge in a few months, and in the meantime Dreux undertook to "coach" him for two or three hours in the evening. It took away all his time for relaxation; but his pupil was so determined to give as little trouble as possible, and so droll and good-humoured, that he soon began rather to enjoy the lessons than otherwise. Besides, young Greyson's character just suited him; he was so utterly free from any description of embarrassment, or reserve, and had such a quaint kind of humour about him. Moreover, he still retained a good deal of boyish simplicity, and was remarkably

shrewd, having all his sister's insight into character, and perception of the wishes and feelings of others.

While he worked he was a man, when he amused himself he was still a boy ; he at once made himself completely at home in Mr. Dreux's small lodgings, and used often to stay and amuse him, when the lessons were over, with odd sketches of character, and accounts of the adventures of the day.


Hewly often figured in these descriptions ; the whole account of that gentleman's *second* courtship being detailed, and various other particulars respecting him ; Helen's determination to abide by her choice ; and Mr. Ferguson's weak submission to her will. One morning in November he came in to excuse himself from attending in the evening as he wanted to dine at Mr. Ferguson's. Mr. Dreux made some difficulty about it, and reminded him of several other occasions lately, when he had absented himself. The pupil, however, was very urgent,—he gave his consent, and, after a very busy day, was extremely glad of the evening for letter-writing. To his surprise, about eleven o'clock Greyson came in, looking anything but lively,—told him he had met Mr. Hewly at dinner, and he had mentioned something "which I hope," he continued, "is not true ; but if it is, I am afraid it will be a great annoyance to you, and even a great inconvenience."

He then told his dismayed auditor that he had heard Hewly relating to his aunt how he had been that afternoon to the house occupied by the master

of the schools, before mentioned as having been lately erected, and to his surprise had found that the evening before he had given the children a whole holiday; that the neighbours had said they supposed it was by Mr. Dreux's orders; that the schoolmaster was out—he went out that same night; and had said he should be home on Saturday morning.

“I never gave him leave to do anything of the kind,” interrupted Dreux. “I have not seen him since Wednesday.”

“I was afraid so,” proceeded Greyson; “but it seems certain that he *did* go away on Thursday evening. I had better tell you what Hewly went on to say, though I fear it will greatly annoy you. As he means to call on you to-morrow morning early, it is best you should be ready for him. He went on, ‘I always thought that man was a hypocrite. I never liked his high professions; but Allerton and Dreux thought they had got quite a treasure,—for you must know that though Allerton has no sort of power in the direction of these schools (all that belongs to Mr. Dreux), he was complimented by the parishioners with the office of Honorary Secretary. I am happy to say Allerton had nothing to do with the choice of this man. However, they both used to trust him to do all manner of odd jobs for them. Mr. Dreux chose him, and he must take the consequences if he has run off, as I half suspect he has.’



“‘Why, if he *has* taken himself off,’ my aunt said, ‘surely he is not such a treasure that his loss cannot be supplied; there must be many masters equally well qualified, who would be glad of so good a situation.’”

“If you could have seen Hewly’s face then, I think you would have seen the most villanously sinister expression you ever set eyes on. It nearly put me in a passion. He went on, in his blandest voice, in which I could easily detect his secret satisfaction,—

“‘I was the more sorry when I recollected that Mr. Dreux has always employed the man to collect the pew-rents of his south gallery and the rent of those two or three fields which belong to the almshouses, so that I am very much afraid the fellow has a large sum of money in his possession, not less than three or four hundred pounds. The almshouses are half in our parish and half in his. Of course he will have to refund. I am very sorry, but if people will do such imprudent things as to authorize a man like that to collect money for them, they must take the consequence; the poor must not suffer.’”

“Four or five hundred pounds!” said his auditor, quite aghast.

“Yes; but is it possible that all this can be true?”

“I am afraid it may be.”

“But it is not near quarter-day, Mr. Dreux.”

"So much the worse; the rents are only paid half-yearly, so are the rents for the almshouse fields, and some few tenements,—and that in November, because then the new nominations take place."

"And is the weekly allowance of five shillings to each person paid out of this sum?"

"Yes."

"Well, the man *may* come home to-morrow morning, or, in the next place, he may not have got any money in his possession."

"Oh yes, he has; I gave him the usual note last Saturday, authorizing him to collect it."

"And then pay it into the bank?"

"Yes; and it is Hewly's business every Monday morning to draw out a sufficient sum to pay the pensioners."

"But at any rate, whatever has happened, half the amount ought to be paid by Mr. Allerton, for half the pensioners are in his parish and of his parish."

"No, Hewly was right, the choice of the master was entirely mine; it is all my doing; but we have trusted him several times before and found him scrupulously honest. How could I imagine such a catastrophe as this?"

"But what will you do? You will not surely take for granted that the man is a rogue and pay down the money?"

"I must try to think of some means of borrowing the sum. I really feel bewildered at present." (He

leaned back in his chair, looking weary and harassed, and laid his hand upon his forehead.)

"Dear Mr. Dreux, nothing is more easy than to borrow the money; any one would lend it you."

"Any one, my dear fellow! But how am I to pay it again? How am I to pay even the interest?"

Greyson had tact enough to see that his reserve did not extend to pecuniary matters; these were externals, and he might venture to push him on the point for further information.

"What is the weekly outlay in payments to the pensioners?"

"Twenty pounds. There are eighty of them."

"Then you have to produce that sum next Monday?"

"Just so; and, thanks to these lessons, I can pay the first week, and that only."

Greyson sat for some time, lost in thought. He was struck by the weary composure of his host's manner, who looked harassed and utterly perplexed. It annoyed him exceedingly to have been the bearer of such evil tidings. The great church clock striking twelve roused them both. Greyson started up and buttoned his coat; Dreux pushed his papers from before him and sighed heavily; he remembered that Greyson had taken a long cold walk, and as he thanked him for his visit he moved mechanically towards the bell to order refreshments.

"Don't ring," interrupted Greyson. "I can let

myself out, and I think the people of the house are in bed."

The host remembered that he was in lodgings, and desisted.

"What will you do?" said Greyson, looking at him with real anxiety. "Indeed, it is not idle curiosity that makes me ask."

"I know not at present what to do," was the answer. "I have no reasonable expectation of being able to pay that sum if I could borrow it."

"But the interest? It would not be more than twenty pounds a-year. Yet you say you must pay the sum yourself—you must take the responsibility on your own shoulders, the whole of it?"

"Yes, the whole of it if I have any regard for my future usefulness and respectability. It would be exquisitely painful to me to lay myself under an obligation to any one; and if I loaded myself with a debt of four hundred pounds I should be harassed. I could struggle with anything else—but the idea of living in debt and dying in debt would be *subduing*,—it would embitter my days."

"But you have some family plate and two or three pictures?"

"They are not nearly worth four hundred pounds."

"Will you promise me one thing?" returned Greyson. "I ask it as a great favour. I should not have told you all this, nor asked how you thought of meeting the demand, if some idea had not come into

my head which I think, if properly worked out, bids fair to lift off the load; but I cannot possibly explain it at present. If you could trust me without an explanation I should be so very glad."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I have no hint at present as to where this fellow is gone; that was not my idea, though by judicious management we may yet find out and recover the money, if he has taken it. But will you let me beg of you to give Hewly the money for next Monday, and then will you *promise* me to take *no further* step till Monday evening, when I shall come in again?"

It instantly occurred to Dreux that Hewly must have dropped some hint as to Allerton's whereabouts. He could not endure the idea of *his* being applied to even to pay half the amount, and he said so.

"I never thought of such a thing, it never entered my mind," was the reply; "but if you could promise not to take any steps till I come again!"—

"You are very mysterious, and your interest is very pleasant. I certainly, under any circumstances, should have taken several days for reflection before I stirred in such a matter as this, therefore I will give the promise, provided *you* promise not to commit either yourself or me."

"Oh, yes; never fear that. Thank you."

"You make me smile. Come, shake hands;

don't burden yourself with my troubles. Go home,—you are young yet for schemes to raise money."

"But you have promised?"

"O yes."

"Ah, I see you are quite convinced that I can do no good!"

"I fear you cannot, without either disclosures, which at present would be imprudent, or committing me, which I KNOW you will not do."

"You consider me quite a boy,—you don't know what I've been trusted to do before now. All sorts of things have been confided to me, partly because I found them out! Why, my cousins tell me all manner of things. As for Fred Bishop, he made his offer through me—fact, I assure you."


"And your sister—are you in *her* confidence?"

"She's very fond of me, of course, and I know as much about her private affairs as I can find out—no more."

"Indeed!"

"Don't you think I'm very like her? The image of her, I think—face, manners, and all."

This question was asked so suddenly that it seemed to take his auditor quite aback. He had some difficulty in meeting young Greyson's eyes. He cleared his voice, and said, calmly, "No, I confess I don't see much likeness; in fact, I never observed any."



"Well, Marion rather piques herself on the idea that she is like me!"

"Will you go home, or am I to sit up all night to listen to your nonsense?"

"Oh, I'm going now; good night, Mr. Dreux."

"Yes," thought that gentleman, as he listened to young Greyson's foot on the stairs, "and I wish you had gone two minutes before. If I had continued to think you were ignorant of my inmost thoughts I should have been more at my ease with you. Well, you are amiable, and a most decided oddity, but no more like your sister than I am. I wonder how much you *do* know,—not the truth, certainly, with all your shrewdness, or you would not have talked as you did just now."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ALMSHOUSE PENSIONERS.

ON the following morning, Mr. Raeburn, as he sat at breakfast with Dora and Marion, was very much astonished to see the latter dart suddenly out of the room and run into the garden, without her bonnet, to meet a gentleman, whom she straightway kissed, and brought in triumph to the house.

"It's Wilfred!" cried Dora, lifting up her glass.

"I'm glad to hear it, my dear," was the answer; "otherwise I might have thought Marion's conduct a little strange."

He accordingly went out to meet his adopted child at the foot of the steps, gave her brother a hearty welcome, and herself a hearty chiding for going out in the frost with no bonnet on.

They brought him into the room, and looked on while he ate such a breakfast as none but growing young men can eat,—at least, so it seemed to the girls, who wondered what could have brought him so suddenly, and knew it was no use asking him

till his hunger was satisfied. They saw a mischievous little smile about his lips. He wanted to tease them. They affected great indifference—asked coolly “how were all at home?”

“Oh, they were very well.”

“Had he brought them any messages or letters?”

“No, for they did not know he was coming; no one but his uncle had the least idea of it.”

In reply to further questions, he said he had been travelling all night by railroad, and had walked from the cross roads. He had come on business—business of his own. His uncle gave him leave, and had sent his kind regards to Mr. Raeburn, and his love to Dora and Marion. His uncle did not know why he had come.

The curiosity of the two girls was now raised to the highest pitch. He further said he should stay over Sunday, and then go away in the middle of the night.

Mr. Raeburn being here appealed to, declared he did not know why the boy was come; he supposed he soon should do.

“Oh, of course, we shall all know soon,” said Marion.

“Ahem! We shall see about that.—Uncle, I’ve done.—You may make your minds quite easy on one point, my dears, which is, that you’ll never find out what brought me here, not if you try till Christmas.—I’ve quite done, uncle.”

"I'm glad to hear it, my boy. I should be sorry if any harm came to you from an over-hearty breakfast in my house."

"May I come with you into your study, there's a green baize door to it?"

"What do you mean by that?" said Dora.

"Nothing insulting; only the housemaids might be listening outside."

Marion and Dora sent several messages to the study, informing young Greyson that it was a very fine morning for a walk; also that there was skating on the pond in Swanstead Liberty; notwithstanding which, it was twelve o'clock before he came out, which he did at last looking very joyful, and declaring he should like a walk of all things.

All lawful means having been tried without success to make him divulge his secret, the trio set out, leaving Mr. Raeburn writing his sermon. There was a sparkling hoar frost, and the trees were spangled with a light fringe of snow. They set out in high spirits, and there was no lack of conversation by the way: such a torrent of questions respecting Elizabeth and Fred, Maidley, Mr. Dreux, What's-his-name Brown, and his mother, Mr. Hewly, and Helen, being poured forth by the fair ladies, as fully entitled them to the reputation of being what is commonly called "true daughters of Eve."

"Mr. Brown was going out to be a missionary, and his mother with him."

"Extraordinary! Good little man! what a disgrace that we ever laughed at him. Where's he going?"

"To Smyrna, or somewhere in the Levant."

"Oh, then we don't think so much of it."

"And what do you mean by saying that we are not good correspondents?" said Greyson. "I write every week, and tell you all sorts of things. I thought I entered into enough details to please anybody. Didn't I tell you last week that I had taught Mr. Dreux to bake potatoes on the hob, wherewith to regale himself when his landlady's gone to bed? and that she had got a little closet on the stairs, where she keeps his coals, butter, eggs, meat, and all his eatables, and a little old black teapot for his tea?"

"Well, let that old feud rest now; you have harped on those *details* since we mentioned them. How's Mr. Dreux,—is he quite well?"

"O yes, I think so, *ma cousine*; but he has been very much harassed lately, and his old Vicar is very poorly, so that now he has to go and see him every day. The old gentleman is perfectly childish. I think he is ninety; but he is very cheerful and happy. I went one day last week with Mr. Dreux to see him. He takes the oddest fancies into his head. He thought I was a foreigner of distinction,—an Ambassador from the Turkish Porte. He said I did him great honour, and then asked me how the Jews' Society flourished. Then he asked

Mr. Dreux how old he was; then he told me he was his son, and asked if I did not think he was a very fine young man. Notwithstanding that he knows he is his curate, he also thinks he is Lord Arundel, and generally calls him so. After that he told us what he had had for dinner, and stopped himself to ask again,—‘Well, my Lord Arundel, and how old are you?’ ‘I’m eight-and-twenty, Sir.’ ‘Eight-and-twenty! You always say the same thing over and over again; no variety at all. I’m sick of hearing you say you’re eight-and-twenty.’ Then he dozed a little, woke up, and said, in quite a sensible tone, ‘Well, brother, shall we read a portion of Scripture together?’ Then he drew a great Bible to him and read a short psalm quite well and reverently. And inquired whether I was a Mahometan, and whether I should mind joining them in prayer: ‘The Church of England, Sir,’ he said, ‘has been accused of ignoring the existence of other bodies; on the contrary, she not only prays for all who profess and call themselves Christians, but also,—you will forgive me, Sir,—for all Jews, Turks, Sir, Infidels, and heretics. Brother, you had better pray, my memory rather fails me.’ So Mr. Dreux prayed for a short time, very simply. The poor old man professed himself greatly edified, and began to tell me how happy he was, and how kind everybody was to him. ‘My dear son, particularly,’ he said, ‘is always kind, and he comes and administers the sacrament to me every

month. So, you see, I have nothing to do but to wait till my change comes.' Then he forgot himself, and said, 'Well, my Lord Arundel, and how old are you?' This time Mr. Dreux varied the answer: 'I shall be nine-and-twenty, Sir, in a few months.'

"Poor old gentleman," said Dora; "he was an excellent man before he became childish."

"Oh very, and he is quite happy now. When we went away he pulled out his watch and made me a present of it. I accepted it, and made a speech in return. He said he hoped our friendly relations with the Porte would never be disturbed. I echoed the sentiment, and said, I thought Britain the finest country in the world. Then he gave Mr. Dreux his snuff-box, and we took leave. And on the stairs we met the housekeeper, to whom we gave the two articles back. He gives his snuff-box to Mr. Dreux every time he sees him."

"I wonder," said Marion, "what made him give Mr. Dreux that particular name."

"Nobody can tell. He calls his housekeeper the churchwarden. The other night, just as my lesson was finished, a message came for Mr. Dreux to go to the old gentleman, as he had something particular to tell him. I offered to stay and let him in, for there is no such thing as a latch-key. When he had been gone an hour, I went to his little closet, took out four potatoes, which I cooked in the ashes; then, when they were nearly ready, I frizzled some

slices of bacon on a fork, laid cloth with some green-handled knives and forks and the cruets, and when he came in, at eleven, all powdered with snow, there was a bright fire and a sumptuous supper, not to mention some hot wine and water with which we caroused. He declares my society does him a great deal of good. He generally sits up till one o'clock, writing, and will certainly follow the hint of the baked potatoes instead of going supperless to bed."

"But why did the old gentleman send for him?"

"Oh, I don't know,—some nonsense or other."

"What does he teach you?" asked Marion.

"Principally mathematics. I like him extremely now I know him. He always was '*somebody*,' you know, and he is now just the same; but, in spite of his dignity, I am on uncommonly good terms with him. I ask him all sorts of questions, and he seems rather to like it. I suspect he tells no one else what he tells me. But really, you know, I have such a winning way with me,—havn't I, Dora?"

"You conceited boy!"

"I am. Well, he told me, the other day, that at first his landlady used to come up every day and tease him about what he would have for dinner,—he never could think of anything; so at last he told her that whatever dinner she had sent him up the day before he would have till further orders; this was some mutton-chops and a batter-pudding. Well, he had this for three weeks, and then he got so tired of it that he told her she might change the

mutton for a veal-cutlet. 'Veal, Sir?' she said, quite aghast; 'why, Sir, veal's a penny a pound more than mutton. The price of veal, this time of year, is awful, Sir,—quite awful, in particular of cutlets.' 'You may send up what you like,' he said. So she sent him eggs and bacon, and that he has had for a fortnight."

"Poor Mr. Dreux!" said Dora, "the idea of his dining off eggs and bacon and eating baked potatoes for his supper."

"Well, he does," said Greyson; "and what's more, I don't believe he cares much about it. In fact, he is so busy he has no time to care for anything. He often comes in to give me my lesson so completely fagged, that when he has set me something to do he falls fast asleep; and when I have done it I am obliged to wake him to tell me if it is right."

"And how are the Fergusons?" asked Marion, anxious to change the subject, for the last few sentences had fallen on her ear very painfully.

"Oh, tolerable. Hewly has ingratiated himself so well, that he is now allowed to visit at the house as an acknowledged admirer of Helen's, but her father will not allow of an engagement; so they choose to call themselves bound in honour to each other, but not engaged."

"Ridiculous! What is the difference?"

"None at all, my fair cousin; but you needn't be so warm about it. Helen is of such a very,—*very*


fickle disposition, that her father thinks she will very likely change her mind if she is not opposed."

"Yes, she certainly is the most fickle person I ever knew," said Dora, and then suddenly checked herself, for she remembered that she was not exactly the person to say it.

"One can hardly hold too fickle a hand to a bad cause," was the reply. "However, Hewly is constantly there, and now I trouble myself very little about the business. I have taken care that Helen should know what kind of a man he is, and, if she chooses to marry him after that, I have nothing more to do with it. Helen gets more fond of her forms every day. My aunt says she has got a little ivory crucifix in her dressing-room, which was a present from Hewly; and she has a picture of a saint kneeling a little way up in the air. The legend is, that her prayers have such power they actually draw her a little way up from the earth before she has done."

"Poor Helen!"

"Her velvet prayer-book is adorned with a great gold cross. Mr. Dreux said to me, the other day, 'It is surprising to find how fond the age is of symbols. We put the sign of the cross everywhere now that it is no longer either a burthen or a reproach to bear it.' I repeated that to Helen; she was very angry, and said she would not be without the protection of that cross on any account (What could she mean? Does she trust to it as a charm?)



And she went on,—‘Father Macauley says we ought to sign ourselves with the cross, at least during our worship, else there is nothing to distinguish us from the world.’”

“Father Macauley, who is he?”

“The new Roman Catholic Priest; don’t you know the chapel? There are a great many poor Irish at Westport. Mr. Hewly knows the Priest, he is a very different man to the vulgar, fat old Father Dennis. Hewly introduced him to Helen, and she says he is a polished gentleman and very devout. I said nothing when she told me, but I thought, ‘if Hewly is so impolitic as to divide his influence with another—one so very, very much his superior, an upright man, who has no nonsense about him, as is said to be the case with this Roman Catholic gentleman—he is leaving himself very little chance of ever being master of Helen’s fortune.’”

“Very little,” repeated Dora; “Helen can scarcely have been long in the habit of familiar intercourse with Mr. Hewly, without perceiving his real insignificance; besides he is not open, nor honest; not that I charge that upon his principles, I should be sorry to be so uncharitable.”

“If his principles are *not* bad, his conduct is; have you not often heard him advocate his doctrine of reserve,—‘We must not preach all that the Church holds,’ he says, ‘lest we offend and startle; we must unfold truth by degrees.’”

"Well, if the principle is allowed at all," said Dora, "it may be allowed in other things besides religion. He has advocated to me before now keeping back that part of the truth which might be for one's disadvantage—to *his*, as he thought, and *mine*. I'm much obliged to him! Mine, indeed! I blush to think that I listened!"

"Does Helen often see this Father Macauley?" asked Marion.

"I suspect she does rather often; he is very much with Hewly: they don't look well together. Hewly is at such great disadvantage, he is rather a shabby little man; the other has quite a military air compared with him; he is certainly no sneak, and evidently takes the upper hand; it is said that he told Hewly it was something for a priest of the true Church to acknowledge or hold any intercourse with one of a rebellious community like his!"

"Well! So he is better-looking than Hewly; so much the worse for that gentleman's prospects."

"Is he young?" asked Marion.

"About forty."

"Helen will turn round again," said Dora, very much annoyed. "How's Frank Maidley?"

"How you slip from one subject to another! Oh, he's very well, he's at Cambridge; he is going to spend the winter vacation at Westport; but all that I have no doubt you know better than I do, Dora."

"Indeed I know nothing about him."

Her cousin paused, and she was sorry she had inadvertently betrayed a fact which evidently surprised him.

"So you hear often?" she said, carelessly, unable to control her wish to know something about him.

"Oh yes, frequently; he writes such odd, droll letters sometimes; he declares he's far gone in misanthropy, and totally sick of the world. The other day he declared he was blighted! but one never knows whether he's in joke or earnest; do you, Dora? Perhaps some fair lady has done something to him. I don't allude to any lady in particular, of course."

"Perhaps some fair lady has," said Dora, calmly; "and perhaps not."

"Humph!" said Wilfred. "It is so droll to read his letters; he does rail so against fortune (you know that old aunt of his left him not a penny; but I think he needn't make such a fuss about it); then he reverts to his favourite theme, and declares he's breaking his heart, that his good spirits are only put on,—only on the surface, and so on; and then he launches out about his chemicals."

"Marion," said Dora, gently, "let us cross the fields and look at the skaters."

The brother and sister looked at each other with some rue, and more surprise; they dropped the conversation, and went to look on at the sides of the pond. Marion then began to rally her brother upon his secret, by way of diverting Dora,

but it was quite without success; and though they both returned to the attack several times that evening, they were obliged to confess at bed-time that they had not obtained the slightest clue.

After a quiet Sunday, he took his leave of Swanstead, setting off to walk to the cross-road about ten o'clock at night, in order that he might reach Westport by the middle of Monday.

During his absence things had gone on much as had been expected; the schoolmaster did not return, and at nine o'clock there was a crowd of children in the street before the locked doors, clamorous for entrance; there soon collected a crowd of parents, idlers, and above all, alms-house pensioners, among whom the direful news spread like wildfire.

Mr. Hewly came down about a quarter-past nine with a face of dismay, sighing over the folly of those whom he did not name, in trusting a man whom he declared bore the stamp of his hypocrisy on his forehead.

The crowd agreed. Mr. Hewly looked "cut up;" he was a good gentleman, and pitied them; *he* would never have been guilty of such an imprudence.

Mr. Hewly sighed, accepted the compliment, but hoped that even the imprudent were honourable and honest. "Oh yes, there could not possibly be a doubt of it."

The crowd seemed to think there was a doubt;

they must not fear, of course the money would be refunded; they would not be robbed of their rights. The crowd perceived the difference between his word and his manner, and augured no good.

Worthy, kind man, he promised that he would go and call on Mr. Dreux (who had authorized the schoolmaster to collect this money), and see whether he was prepared to refund it; "and if not, my poor friends," he went on, "we know to whom we must look in all times of danger and adversity."

After this pious address the old women wept, and the lookers-on said it was a shame.

Mentally they saw Mr. Dreux in the dust, under good Mr. Hewly's feet, who proceeded forthwith to give them some more excellent advice, and then set off on his pious mission.

Almost the whole of the crowd followed him to Mr. Dreux's lodgings, making a great commotion in the street. He was not at home, he had been called up in the night to witness the quiet death of his old Vicar, who had died in peace, after a few hours' illness.

He had presented his snuff-box for the last time, his Curate was now coming home with it in his hand. He paused, surprised when he saw the not very orderly crowd before his lodging; they were gazing up earnestly at his window—some of them in a low voice were expressing an opinion that he had run off too. He was seen advancing, they instinctively became quiet—*that* fear was dissipated.

He looked sad and weary; they hoped he was penitent for having thrown so many poor creatures out of bread! Dear good Mr. Hewly (as kind a man as ever drew breath) was upstairs, talking to his landlady; they hoped when he came in he would be told what they thought of the matter.

He came on, and by his face showed no consciousness that they were gathered together on his account. They let him pass through them, and as he reached the door, they greeted him with a volley of groans,—good ones, and deep,—for they had soldiers, sailors, and numbers of low Irish among them by this time, who had joined for the sake of the fun.

At the same moment, the children began to cheer, not that they meant anything by it beyond the pleasure of making a noise. He had his back to them, and they were valiant; but he turned suddenly round on the door-steps, and took off his hat, as if he meant to speak to them.

They fell back in a great hurry. Fifty little boys cried out, "It wasn't me, Sir;—Oh, Sir, I didn't do it." The old women sobbed, but curtsied; the old men subdued their cry of shame into a gruff cough, and tried to look respectful; and the soldiers and sailors, tickled by this sudden change, wrought simply by a commanding gesture and a piercing eye, roared with laughter, and cheered him vociferously.

He saw that this was not the moment to make

himself heard, and, after a moment's hesitation, entered the house, and shut the door behind him.

There was a dead silence without for about five minutes; the crowd became dense, and all eyes were fixed on the window. It was furnished with a little balcony.

At length the window-blind was drawn up, and the sash flung up by Mr. Dreux, who stepped out into the balcony, and looked at them with grave self-possession. Mr. Hewly stood a little drawn back, looking, both morally and physically, very small.

With a gesture of his hand he demanded silence, for his appearance had been the signal for a storm of cheers. They stopped as soon as they could. Then he took out his watch, and informed them that it wanted but a-quarter to ten; that if the almshouse pensioners did not immediately repair to the Town-hall their money would not be paid till the following week, for they well knew that the Mayor granted the use of the room for one hour only. He lamented that the schoolmaster had decamped, and informed them that he himself was the only person who would be a loser. Then he ordered all the children to go back instantly to the school, where, he said, he would meet them, and make the best arrangement he could. Having said this, with an aspect of authority which completely calmed them, he turned round, entered his room, and shut the window, leaving the people rushing

different ways;—the almshouse pensioners to the Town-hall, the children to the school, where a man was speedily procured to perform the part of master, he having already officiated in that capacity during an illness of the missing master.

As for Hewly, he went and drew the money, feeling like a sneak, as he was. He was greeted with most unceremonious requests to “look sharp,” together with several compliments of a very equivocal nature;—they were whispered near him, and made his cheeks tingle. They had nothing whatever to do with the matter in hand, but were not the less galling on that account. They seemed to take note of his hands, and pronounced them coarse; of his height,—he was a “shabby little chap,” they said, “a whipper-snapper,”—“a poor-spirited sneak;” Mr. Dreux would make two of him. “There were shoulders for you! and didn’t he walk upright, for all the world like a Lord High Admiral!”

Poor Mr. Hewly! Was not this unfair? Could he help it, if nature and education had combined to make him stoop and turn in his toes?

But he had his revenge. The Mayor came, and a respectful silence followed, during which Hewly was heard to whisper mysteriously, “All well at present, my good Sir; but wait till this day week! However, *perhaps* he may be able to pay the debt; or if not, *perhaps* the public may do something; or, perhaps, I may be able to think of some plan.”

This speech sunk the spirits of the audacious crowd, they scarcely knew why; and the popular opinion again began to waver, the more so because the Mayor, who was a very grave man, shook his head sagely, and looked as if he did not know what to make of the matter.

In the meantime young Greyson got back to Westport, and, at the usual hour, went to Mr. Dreux's lodgings to take his lesson.

The pupil was excessively restless and uneasy, the tutor no less so. The room was full of old silver plate, all the six chairs covered with it, and the sofa, as well as with several other sorts of antique finery, silver models of tombs, with cross-legged knights upon them, costly snuff-boxes, &c.

The lesson being over, Greyson ventured to ask whether the plate had been valued, and what it was worth.

"One hundred and fifty pounds is its value," was the reply, "and no more."

"One hundred and fifty pounds," repeated Greyson, in a low voice; "and have you really nothing besides, Mr. Dreux?"

"Yes, I have a diamond ring, which I had overlooked. I am glad to find that it is worth, that is, it will *sell* for fifty pounds."

The pupil breathed more freely, and looked about him at this display of old-fashioned splendour. He supposed Mr. Dreux had forgotten his hints, or, at any rate, expected no result from them.

After a pause, he stammered out a hope that he was not intruding, and seeing Mr. Dreux's eyes fixed on him with surprise, he went on: "I came here to-night on purpose to tell you of something which is on my mind; but it makes me so excessively uncomfortable to have to say it, that I hope you will make allowance for my mode of doing so."

The heightened colour, and the deep sigh of embarrassment and excitement with which he said this, made his auditor look intently at him, and lay down his book on the table.

"I heard you say the other night, that you could not bear the idea of being in debt."

The auditor winced as he said it. But he went on, hastily—

"These things, it appears, are worth more than one-half the sum you want?"

"Yes, if any one would buy them. But who wants plate stamped with another man's arms? and who cares for the monuments of another man's ancestors?"

"If it has been valued at that sum, no doubt it is fully worth it. But that was not what I wanted to say. I wanted to tell you that my guardian pays all my bills, and allows me to spend what I think reasonable. So that, without having any money in hand, or any fixed allowance, I have all that I require."

Mr. Dreux now knew that something must be coming, but he did not look half so uncomfortable

as his pupil, who had far more the air of a person about to ask a favour than one desirous to confer one.

"Well," he said, in a low voice, "what else have you to tell me?"

"Only this: that if you could borrow the sum, or half of it, from a person who does not want it, and, consequently, without laying yourself under the slightest obligation"——

"There is no such person," was the quick reply. "Do not propose to me anything so exquisitely painful as that I should take advantage of the generosity of a very young man;—I could not endure it, indeed. I am very much indebted to you, and touched by your kindness, but I could not do it. Besides, Greyson, you are a minor."

Greyson paused to allow his excitement to subside, and then went on more boldly on another tack.

"Well, but you told me that these things were worth something more than 200*l*. Now, if you would sell them to any one else for that sum, why not to me?"

"That is a different thing. But what could you do with them?—they are not worth that sum to you."

"Very true; neither is 200*l*. worth much to me; because whatever I want is paid for by my guardians. If you would sell me these things for 200*l*., which sum I have now in my possession, I should

have no object in converting them again into money until I came of age, and by that time it is possible you might be able to buy them of me yourself."

Mr. Dreux made no answer; he sat lost in thought. Here was a way by which he might clear off one-half of his debt; and painful as it was to do what seemed to his sensitive mind the taking advantage of the generosity of a mere boy, he did not think his conscience would acquit him if he declined.

His pupil left him some time to his cogitations, and then proceeded: "This plan, if you will accede to it, will place one-half of the sum required at your disposal; before the rest is wanted we may trace this man, and recover something; or Mr. Allerton will return, and of course he will insist on paying the other half."

"I selected this Master."

"But I believe I have heard you say that it was his idea to permit him to collect the field rents; the fields are in his parish too. This has nothing really to do with the *school*. Besides, if the cases had been reversed, and you had been absent, would not Mr. Allerton have felt himself bound in honour to pay the whole?"

"I dare say he would."

"And would you, on your return, have suffered it?"

"No, certainly not; I believe you are right." And thereupon followed another long pause, which was broken at length by the tutor remarking that he

supposed Mr. Paton was acquainted with Wilfred's wish.

"No human being knows anything of it but myself," was the reply.

"Then, my dear fellow, how came you to be possessed of such a large sum of money?"

"When I left you last I told my uncle Paton that I wanted to go to Swanstead for a day or two. He treated it as a whim, and did not ask me why; no doubt he thought I wanted a peep at my sister, and let me go.

"When I got there, I told Mr. Raeburn I wanted the sum of 400*l*. I reminded him that I had always been very moderate; I had not even spent so much as my guardians would have been quite willing I should. Then I asked him whether he would lend me that sum, though I could not possibly tell him what I wanted it for.

"He said he was not empowered to lend it me out of my own property without the consent of the other guardian, my uncle Paton. I told him that would not do, for no one but himself must know that I had borrowed it. I am sure he believed that I wanted it to lend Frank Maidley, for his chemical experiments. He thought a little, and then said he would not lend me 400*l*., because he knew I could not pay him the interest, but he would give me 200*l*. for a present, if that would do. I declared I had rather pay it when I came of age; but he only laughed, and said, if I was too proud to have it as a

present from him, I should not have it at all. So I took it, and he promised not to tell *any living soul* that he had given it me."


"And why did you make that stipulation?" asked his auditor, touched by this evidence of his generosity. "Did you think it would lessen the obligation?"

"I don't exactly know; I suppose I thought you would rather it was a secret between us; I wish that also. But obligation there never was. It was given me by a person who did not want it. It is now possessed by a person who has no use for it,—who has, however, a good use to which he is not allowed to put it, for I suppose, Mr. Dreux, you will force me to take a full equivalent for it. I did hope you would borrow it of me, and then sell your plate to make up the rest of the sum."

"You have lifted a great load from my shoulders. You have both thought and acted for me to far more purpose than I have done for myself."

"You see," said Greyson, "there is no doubt my uncle Raeburn thinks we are going to squander the money in our chemical experiments. He never expects to see any result, and will not ask where it is all gone. He only hopes we shall get ourselves into no mischief, for, as I was leaving him, he called after me to mind I did not blow myself up. So if you would borrow it of me, or, or"—

"Shake hands, and let things rest as they were. If you will take this rubbish of me, I will take



the 200*l.* for it ; and remember I *am* under an obligation to you (and I do not mind it), for you have told me you do not mean to part with the plate, consequently your taking it is only a *ruse* to prevent my paying interest."

"Such a thought never entered my head."

"No one else would buy it, Greyson, excepting to melt down as old silver. It's not entering your head proves that you are not experienced in such dealings. You are anxious to help me out of a difficulty in the way most pleasant to my feelings. Well, you have done so. I can breathe again, and I have three months before me, during which I hope I shall be able to make up the other sum, supposing we cannot recover it from this rogue."

Greyson saw that various feelings were working in the breast of his host. He had no motive for further continuing the conversation. It was plain that all this old finery, and these evidences of family pride, were to be left on his hands. He got up to mend the fire ; he then went to the little closet on the stairs, and took out some potatoes to roast in the ashes, and some eggs ; then he collected all the plate on the table, and began to examine it, commenting on its beauty, and now and then hazarding a conjecture as to the use of some of the more antique pieces.

"I think the best thing I can do with it will be to give it to Marion for a wedding present," he said. It was a bold stroke ; but his curiosity was excited,

and he thought this would be a likely way of satisfying it. If there was anything between Mr. Dreux and his sister, what present could be more appropriate?

He heard a start, but did not look up. "Your sister is going to be married, then," asked a voice, not exactly like Mr. Dreux's. "Marion?" he asked, looking at a face not exactly like his either.

"What! Marion going to be married? Not that I know of; but I presume that some time in her life she will enter into the holy estate of matrimony, and all these gewgaws would look most elegant on her table, and perhaps delude the world besides into the idea that we are of an ancient family."

"Oh!" was the succinct reply. "How very, very cold it is to-night!"

"Yes, it seems quite to make you shiver. But, Mr. Dreux, supper's nearly ready."

"You odd fellow! The idea of your preparing it yourself,—laying the cloth too!"

"That's the best part of the fun. Now I'll go and get the pepper."

He got up suddenly, and the same instant a noise of retreating footsteps startled them both. They had been sitting with the door not quite shut, for the chimney smoked. Wilfred darted out, and distinctly saw the skirts of a man's coat, as he whisked into a small bed-room close to their sitting-room, and shut to the door.

"It must be the other lodger," said Mr. Dreux,

very much annoyed, "and he has been listening at our door."

Wilfred said nothing. To his exquisite delight, he perceived that the man had shut a piece of his coat-lap into the door, and could not draw it through; he must consequently be standing close to it within, and could not fail to hear every word they said.

The young gentleman had a skewer in his hand with which he was about to toast some bacon; he stuck it suddenly and securely through the bit of coat, pinning it to the door, so that no pulling could free it, and then proceeded in a high, raised voice, not the least like his own, to harangue Mr. Dreux on the impropriety of listening at doors.

"Listeners," he observed, "never heard any good of themselves."

The lodger here made an ineffectual effort to draw in his coat.

"Oh, my dear friend," said Wilfred, addressing Mr. Dreux, and speaking through his nose, "what a shocking vice is eavesdropping! How mean and small in the minds of upright humanity! How it lowers a man in the eyes of his fellow-mortals! Yes, my hidden individual, the Rev. Arthur Cecil Dreux, descended from a long line of Crusaders, godson of a Bishop, grandson of a Lord, Curate of Pelham's Church, and Wrangler, I forget in what year,—also the amiable youth, W. Greyson, of this town, have had their feelings harrowed up and dis-

gusted by your conduct, my hidden individual. Never forget that, henceforth, in their eyes you are little beyond all appreciable littleness. Ahem, you needn't try to draw your coat through, for I've got hold of it." This was said in his natural voice, through the key-hole, while the lodger made another desperate, but unsuccessful attempt, and was heard breathing hard inside; Mr. Dreux all the time standing by, laughing so that he could not check Greyson.

"Call the police," said that young gentleman, gravely. "Hi! let's break open the door!"

Upon this the hidden lodger uttered a cry, apparently of fear, and rent away his coat from the skewer, double-locking the door with frantic haste, while Mr. Dreux, with his hand on Wilfred's mouth, dragged him back into his room and shut the door.

"Will you be quiet?" he exclaimed, as soon as he could speak for laughing. "We shall have the whole house about us; and I am sure you have punished the poor man enough, he really seemed quite frightened."

"He's a coward, as well as an eavesdropper, then. What harm could we have done him?"

"It is very lucky for us that he is a coward, else he would have come out and confronted us. What could I have said then?—we have no proof that he listened."

Wilfred was sorry he could do no more, and

applied himself to his cookery, in a short time serving up an excellent supper of potatoes and bacon, with poached eggs. He was in such high spirits that his host had the greatest difficulty in keeping him within reasonable bounds; perhaps he would have failed in the attempt if he had not declared that he would not take the money of him unless he was quiet.

"Well, have we decided everything?" he asked, when supper was over.

"Yes; we decide that this plate is yours, and the money mine."

Wilfred was rather dejected; he made another attempt to make his host borrow the money. He declared the things were so old-fashioned that he was afraid they would make him feel old before his time; and then began to put them back into the chest from which they had been taken, commenting on them all the time in a manner the most absurd,—he was sure he did not know where he was to keep them.

At last he said he would have them, provided Mr. Dreux would promise that he should be the first person applied to to advance the rest of the money. He declared, with boyish vehemence, that he could not bear the idea of Hewly's perceiving that there was any difficulty in procuring it, or that it put Mr. Dreux to the slightest inconvenience to lay it down.

His host, in very good spirits, assured him that he had removed a great weight from his mind, and proceeded to lock up the chest containing the plate and jewels, giving him the key, and telling him to write his name on the chest, which he did, and then, careless as he was, left the key on a little table and forgot it. He promised to send for the chest in a few days, and sat down to pay over the notes which Mr. Raeburn had given him.

"Now then," said his host, "let me give you a written acknowledgment that this plate, &c. is yours."

"What! do you think I wish to cheat? No; I assure you I really mean to take it quite honourably. I shall soon send for it. In fact, I will sell it if you wish. I don't want to lay you under the slightest obligation."

Mr. Dreux smiled at this novel notion of cheating, and explained that, in case he should die before Wilfred came of age, he wished him to possess a written agreement, by which it would appear that he had sold these articles and received for them their full value. Having made such a statement, he gave it to young Greyson and told him to put it in his pocket-book.

"And will you, as a favour to me, keep this affair and everything connected with it a profound secret?" asked the pupil, as he held out his hand, when about to take leave.

"Why?" asked Dreux, with a smile,—“because you think it will be pleasant to my feelings not to have it known?”

“Oh, I really have a reason,—two reasons.”

“Well, I do promise.”

He helped his pupil with his overcoat, and took up the candle to light him down the dark stairs; he went to the door with him (for the household were already in bed), and then returned, feeling lighter of heart than he had done for a long time. He shut the outer door and bolted himself into his bed-room, which opened into the sitting-room. He slept very soundly, and woke later than usual, for he had lately been too much harassed to sleep long. It struck him as very odd, when he was ready to leave his room, that his door was locked on the outside, and it could not be opened till he rang for his landlady. She seemed surprised, and declared that the door could not have been locked without hands. However, being very busy, he gave himself no further concern about it, contenting himself by remarking that the lock must have sprung.

His first care was to pay over the 200*l.* to the account of the almshouses; his next to inform Hewly of what he had done. It would be some time before the rest of the money was wanted; he thought he could take two more evening pupils, and make other arrangements, which would enable him to meet the emergency.

He had now leisure to think of his own prospects as regarded the probability of his remaining in the parish. He had written to the Patron, a descendant of old Pelham's, informing him of the death of the Vicar, and telling him that, his own salary being paid up to Christmas, he should continue to perform the duty as usual till that time. The Patron, Colonel Masterman, the same gentleman who had bought his library, wrote back to thank him for his communication, and remarked, that, as he hoped to be in the town in a few days, he would do himself the pleasure of calling.

In the meantime various considerations made him think it highly probable that the living would be offered to him. He had always been friendly with Colonel Masterman, and it had long been said in the town that the parishioners would petition the Patron to present it to him, at the death of the old Vicar. It was worth about 250*l.* a-year; and, in his former circumstances, he would have preferred to remain a curate, rather than burden himself with such a tie; but now he considered that he could not do much with his income as a curate; and he might effect great good, even with so small an addition to it. He thought, then, if it was offered, he would accept it, for it would in no wise increase his responsibility, and he could not be more tied down than he already was.

In the evening Wilfred came, and they set to work in downright earnest; for the last two lessons

had been very spiritless affairs, and they wished to make up for lost time.

"And how is our interesting eavesdropper?" asked the pupil, as he rose to take leave.

"Oh, I have not seen anything of him. You must have put him quite out of countenance, for 'he hides his diminished head,' and keeps as quiet as if he really thought we had power to take him up for listening."

The next day young Greyson asked the same question, just before the landlady made her appearance with the kettle.

Mr. Dreux repeated the question to the good woman in rather different terms, and was informed that he had left early in the morning of the previous day, taking all his luggage with him.

"He only took my room for a week," she proceeded, swelling with anger, "and I don't believe he's no better than he should be. If *he* didn't steal them bath-bricks out o' my shop, I should like to know who did."

"Bath-bricks! What! things not worth a penny? Nonsense!"

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Greyson,—tenpence apiece, if you please."

"Not likely a man would steal anything so bulky and of so little value," said Mr. Dreux.

"Well, Sir, they're gone;—ten on 'em, all of a row. You remember 'em, Sir,—used to stand in the corner, by the passage?"

Mr. Dreux couldn't say he did; and the landlady left the room, having previously swept up the hearth.

"That's my doing!" exclaimed young Greyson, with a smile of delight. "He knew he could never look me in the face again, so he's taken himself off. Oh, Mr. Dreux, did I leave my key here? because, if not, I've lost it."

"I've not seen it. What do you want it for?"

"Just to take a look at my old crusaders."

"You will do no such thing;—we are going to work to-night. When you have finished we will look for the key. But you are a careless fellow;—how came you to leave it behind you?"

"Oh, I forgot it."

"Yes, just like you; and I wish you would send for the chest, Greyson."

"I've told a man to come for it this very night. I'm going to polish all the silver myself, with a chemical preparation that I've made. I shall work at it like any footman."

After the lesson, a search was instituted for the missing key. The furniture was moved, the shelves searched, but without success. They were still looking for it, when the porter came for the chest, and duly conveyed it to Mr. Paton's house, where, being directed to young Greyson, it was taken up to his bed-room, not without a good deal of grumbling about its great weight.

When the owner of the chest came in, it was very

natural that he should wish to inspect his property. Accordingly, he bolted himself into his room, and proceeded to pick the lock of his box, intending to amuse himself with a sight of his old teapots and mustard-pots, &c., not to mention his diamond-ring, which latter he intended to have altered, and present it to his aunt, Mrs. Paton; and she well deserved it of him, for in every respect she had treated him like a son.

He picked the lock without much difficulty, and, on lifting up the lid, found a thick layer of silver-paper lying at the top of the chest, which he was sure he had not laid there; a good deal of fine white dust came up as he moved it. His heart beat quick;—he began to suspect that all was not right. He hastily tore away the paper, and found beneath it ten bath-bricks, a hearth-brush, some large pieces of coal, several heavy books belonging to Mr. Dreux, and two folio volumes of Foxe's "Acts and Monuments!"

He was so aghast at this unexpected sight that he knelt for some time before the chest without uttering a sound. Here was a pretty state of things! And yet he believed he must keep the secret, for if it came to Mr. Dreux's ears, he would feel that he had received the 200*l.* as a gift, and that would never do.

He then remembered the lodger. It was clear that he must be the thief. He had seen the silver lying about the room, and very likely had heard

them descant on its value. His having left early the next morning seemed to establish the fact. He had never seen him, and if he had been willing to try to trace him, he could not do it without making the affair public.

He felt very much perplexed, and knew that in the course of time he should be compelled to tell the facts to Mr. Dreux ; but he resolved to put off the evil day, hoping that before long he might be in such circumstances that it would not matter to him.

All the next day he kept changing his mind as to what was best to be done, but in the evening he found Mr. Dreux in such good spirits that he could not bear to damp them.

He had to endure a good deal of banter from him on the subject of the lodger, and the terror his harangue had inspired. The landlady had declared that he went away in such a hurry that he had left 6s. 8d. on his chimney-piece,—an unprecedented thing !—and also a very tolerable coat hanging up behind the door !

It suddenly occurred to Wilfred that he should like to go into this room, and see whether the man had left anything else behind him,—anything by which he might be traced, or any letters or papers by which his name might be ascertained.

The landlady just then appearing with a note which required a short answer, he asked her several questions while Mr. Dreux wrote ; and she, being

gratified at the interest he took in her affairs, was very communicative.

"He only went out at night," she said, "and he was as stealthy in his habits as a cat."

"I should like to see his room," said Greyson, carelessly.

"Well, Sir, I'm sure you are very welcome."

"But not now, my dear fellow," said Mr. Dreux, surprised at the oddness of the idea, "we have no time to spare at present."

Greyson gave in, and got through his lesson extremely well, considering how much his mind was occupied with other matters. As soon as it was finished, he declared his wish to go and examine the eavesdropper's room, and Mr. Dreux took up a candle and went with him.

He was amused by the curiosity expressed by his pupil, and stood looking on while he opened the closet and peered about in all directions.

"Come, Greyson, have you done?" he said at last. "I declare, you are as curious as the lodger."

The party accused made no answer. He was feeling in the pockets of the coat: most of them were empty, but at last he brought out a handful of Sunday-school tickets, and laid them on the bed, then drew out a common clasp-knife, and lastly, an envelop.

"This is in your handwriting!" he exclaimed, as he gave it to Mr. Dreux, "and it is addressed to the schoolmaster."

Mr. Dreux took it, and turned it round. There could be no doubt about it,—the words were as plain as possible: “Mr. Thomas Dickson, Schoolmaster, St. Clement’s-lane.”

“This, most assuredly, is my writing,” he said.

“And here’s an old crumpled note,” proceeded Greyson,—“I found it between the pocket and the lining; it is signed with Mr. Allerton’s name:—

“ ‘MR. DICKSON,—You will be good enough to see that the boys learn the inclosed questions and answers. They must be ready with them by Wednesday.

“ ‘Yours truly,

“ ‘FRANCIS G. ALLERTON.’ ”

“What are we to think of this? The lodger must have been Dickson himself.”

“Impossible! I saw the man several times, and I could not have been deceived. He was a much smaller, darker man, than Dickson. Besides, of all houses, Dickson would not have taken a room in the one in which *I* live.”

The search having now become of the deepest interest to both parties, they set to work to examine every pocket again, and were rewarded for their diligence by finding a note signed A. C. D., and written not many days before the disappearance of the schoolmaster.

“That sets the matter at rest, then,” said Wilfred;

"the man was Dickson. No wonder he was frightened when I talked of calling the police."

"I don't agree with you; these notes are in a place where no one looking at the coat could fail to find them. I do not believe it was Dickson,—I am convinced to the contrary. I cannot understand the thing."

"If it was not Dickson, it is very clear he wished us to think so."

"*No!* Why, how could he possibly suppose that we should search his coat? What interest could he suppose it would have for us? Besides, we know nothing against the man, and what object could he have for trying to pass himself off for a supposed thief?"

"None, unless he *has* committed some crime, and wishes to fix it on another man," said young Greyson, feeling his way.

"We know of no crime, unless you call listening a crime. Come now to my room, and wash your hands after your researches."

"Your landlady says he stole her bath-bricks," remarked Greyson, trying to speak carelessly. "He must have required a good large box to put them in, nearly as large a one as your plate-box—my plate-box, I mean.—Why! here are two torn letters, both addressed Mr. T. Dickson, and thrust into the fire-grate. What does this all mean?"

"I cannot tell. If they have been put here

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CHAPTER XX.

MRS. BROWN'S MUSTARD-POT.

YOUNG Greyson's hopes for Mr. Dreux were destined to meet with a disappointment.

The next day happening to dine at Mr. Ferguson's house, he met Colonel Masterman, and heard his host talk of Mr. Dreux in a very slighting way, as a young man who held rather wild notions. He thought he observed a peculiar smile in Helen's eyes when this was said.

Mr. Hewly was present, and he observed that it was Mr. Ferguson's intention to make him appear as well as possible in the eyes of the Patron. In fact, it was but natural, when one man believed he must accept another as his son-in-law, that he should try to raise him (if he could) beforehand.

Colonel Masterman's second son was present, and Mr. Ferguson appeared to take a great interest in him. He talked to him about India, where he had spent the best years of his youth, and where, he intimated, he had quite enough interest in certain quarters to get an appointment in the house

with which he had been connected for any young man for whom he chose to exert himself.

Greyson was very shrewd; he saw there was an understanding between the parties, and that now the Curate of "St. Plum's" had little chance of the living.

He kept his ideas to himself, and in a few weeks they were confirmed: the living was presented to the Rev. Brigson Hewly, who read himself in on New Year's-day; and as the parishioners did not choose to offend *him* individually, they burnt the Patron in effigy, partly because they disliked his choice, but principally because he had taken no notice of their petition.

In the meantime, it was not natural that the new vicar should feel cordially towards the man whom they had wished to have. Nothing, indeed, would have pleased him better than at once to have told the late vicar's curate that he could dispense with his services, but he was a long-headed man, and did not choose to take such an unpopular step till he had got some hold in the parish. He resolved to ask Dreux to stay, hoping that he could make him so very uncomfortable that he would soon throw up the curacy of his own accord.

He called at his lodgings, and offered him the curacy. He was a little mortified at the unhesitating pleasure with which it was accepted; in fact, the present curate, and virtually late vicar, felt that there was scarcely any annoyance he would not

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submit to rather than give up all influence over the people, and leave them altogether in the hands of Mr. Hewly.

And now began the real tug of war. Hewly was determined that he never would dismiss his curate, and equally determined to make him so uncomfortable that he would soon go of his own accord. Unfortunately for him, if he did induce his curate to leave him, he could not prevent his preaching in the afternoon, for the lecturer was constituted such for life. So there was not much use in getting rid of him. But it was gall and wormwood to him to see the power that this circumstance gave. He felt that the church was only half his own; and in the morning he preached to empty benches,—for his adherents dared not follow him from his late church, as he had so constantly spoken against the wickedness of leaving one's parish church; and as for his new parishioners, some from good motives and some from bad ones, chose to absent themselves, so that from his lofty pulpit he could see the handsome woodwork of the benches very plainly,—there were few shawls and fewer coats to hide it from his view.

On the other hand, in the afternoon there was always such a crowd as could scarcely be accommodated; the people stood so thickly in the aisle, that they crumpled and crushed his clerical garments as he passed down it to read prayers, for it was an established custom that the vicar or his

curate should read prayers for the afternoon lecturer. The lecturer's first act of conciliation was to do away with this custom by reading for himself; but it soured the vicar's feelings only to have done it for him twice.

Mr. Hewly felt that he could not stir; his curate's conduct irritated and perplexed him to the last degree: from the slight knowledge he had previously had of him, he had supposed him to be possessed of far too high a spirit to endure the most trifling impertinence; and his dignified carriage, together with a certain calmness in his voice, kept him at an unaccountable distance in spite of himself.

He now found his curate was not the kind of man he had imagined; instead of firing up at any little act of neglect, or any assumption on his part of the tone of command, he seemed not to notice the one, and to think the other quite inadvertent, and treated his vicar with such polished courtesy, as made that gentleman feel it almost impossible not to assume his very best behaviour in return. But it annoyed him to feel that he could not act the gentleman half so well with his most elaborate exertions, as his curate did without effort and by nature. As to anything so ungentlemanly on Hewly's part as an intentional affront, such an idea never seemed to occur to him; and after a short struggle, a few poor, spiritless attempts to be rude to him, the vicar gave in,

and treated him with proper consideration, afraid lest he might show him by his manner that he felt his want of courtesy, but supposed he knew no better !

Mr. Hewly at this time would have given something to have been born a gentleman ; his manner and address were by no means bad, but the consciousness of a certain difference between his own manner and that of his curate, filled him with envy and dislike. Without the slightest assumption on the part of the curate, he received a great deal of genuine respect and deference : the clerk's bow and the pewopener's curtesy were quite different things, as bestowed on the vicar or on his curate. They were all alike : the poor spoke to him in quite a different tone ; to the less familiar one they reserved for Dreux ; and the worst of it was, they evidently did not do it on purpose ; instinctively and without effort, they entertained for the one a deferential feeling, that no kindness, no pastoral superintendence could teach them to extend to the other !

It was very provoking, the more so as he was obliged to keep it to himself. But he thought, though he felt obliged to be polite to his curate, he could still annoy him with a little patronage ; he accordingly hid his discomfiture, and asked him to come and dine with him ; but he detected himself repeatedly during dinner, hoping that he was doing the honours of his table in a stylish and gentleman-

like manner, and in wondering whether everything was set on the table properly. He had ordered an absurdly abundant and handsome dinner for two people; he now blamed himself for it, as it seemed to make his guest of too much consequence.

He tried to think of some of the pieces of good advice that he had intended to bestow on his curate; and some of the little patronizing speeches he meant to have made; but it would not do, he could not "screw his courage to the sticking point," and he actually found himself following his guest's lead, who being specially desirous to get over the evening without any unpleasant argument, was introducing, one by one, topics of conversation on which he thought they could agree and talk amicably, humouring him in his own house, where he wished to play the patron! and changing his subjects with great tact, as he deemed it necessary.

Mr. Hewly was acute enough to see this, but he could not help himself; and all the time the unconscious curate, who saw in the whole affair nothing but a piece of ordinary civility, irritated him by his unaffected ease. In fact, he considered this dinner rather a dull thing, but one which he must go through with, and that with a good grace. He was accordingly giving himself up, with amiable patience, to the task of purveying conversation and keeping things smooth.


Oh the annoyance of being with one's superiors! thought Mr. Hewly, as the conviction became more

strong in his mind than ever, that this man, his own curate, was so far above him, that he actually could not feel at ease with him, even in his own house, unless he treated him with proper respect.

And yet Mr. Dreux preserved towards him, however slightly, yet constantly, a certain recognition of his superiority in point of relative position; he perceived this, though he could not define it; and the more he knew him, the more he saw that he had mistaken reserve for pride, and energy for a high spirit.

When a man, remarkable for uprightness and honesty of purpose, gets into contact with one of sinister disposition, not at all straightforward, and conscious of defective motives, he is sure to make him feel extremely uncomfortable; he feels acutely that he is not honest, and fancies the other feels it too.

Hewly was very glad when this unpleasant evening was over, and he mentally resolved never again to encounter a dinner *tête-à-tête* with his curate; he had not accomplished his purpose; he had not shown himself the patron, the great man, and he had not even felt at his ease. He began to be quite afraid of him,—he thought he should never be able to shake him off; he felt that he should lower himself by the exhibition of any petty act of meanness, and though he was intensely jealous of his curate, he could not bear that he should despise him.



So matters went on for several weeks. The curate read prayers, and the vicar preached in the morning, dilating on such matters as he thought of importance. In the afternoon the curate preached exactly as he had been accustomed, and set forth precisely the same dogmas as before, though he never advanced them in a controversial way. "In fact," said poor Hewly to one of his friends, "he speaks with no more hesitation as to his being in the right, than he might do if no man had ever differed from him: he never even alludes to my opinions, any more than if he ignored both their existence and mine altogether."

But though in public the curate lost no ground, he felt that everything his vicar touched he marred; they had both made a mistake, and though they were both accommodating, it was evident that they could not work together. However, by really mutual forbearance, they got on till the middle of February. Dreux did not care how much of the work he did; in fact, he had been accustomed to do it all; on the other hand, the Vicar had a delicate chest, and was very glad on cold snowy days to sit at home by the fire. Dreux was extremely accommodating about all points that he thought unimportant; but then he was tenacious of all others, and this must inevitably have led to a quarrel, if the vicar had not been so hoarse that he could scarcely speak, and the curate so busy, owing to an unusually sickly season, that excepting

for a few minutes at a time, they scarcely saw each other.

For the present, as long as the dreary east wind blew and the frost froze his finger ends, poor Mr. Hewly had neither strength nor desire to disturb his curate, lest he should suddenly take leave of the parish and leave it on his hands, and then he would be in a terrible predicament. He got quite pleasant in his manners, and, having been long accustomed to weak health, was quite astonished to see his curate coming in day after day as well as ever, though he could see him from the vicarage windows standing over an open grave with the snow piled up on each side, and himself with a thick powdering of it on his head before he had concluded the service. Yet he was none the worse. He could stand anything in the way of work and weather. He seemed to bring an atmosphere of health into the house with him. His hands were always warm, his step always elastic; he knew no inconvenience from the east wind, and though he was very busy, he seemed rather to like coming in daily to see his vicar and tell the small unimportant pieces of parish news so interesting to clergymen, and to them only.

By the middle of February the weather suddenly changed and became remarkably warm and mild. This filled the churches with a continuous volley of coughs; the town was visited with influenza, but the mild weather released Mr. Hewly and put a stop to the friendliness which had arisen between

him and his curate. He could now put his head out of doors, and they again began to pull different ways, and that with considerable vigour.

Among the many who were laid up with influenza was Mr. What's-his-name Brown. He sent one morning to know whether Mr. Dreux would take his week-day evening lecture for him; the latter complied, and wrote to Wilfred not to come for his lesson till nine.

Now Mrs. Brown bethought herself that she should like to give Mr. Dreux a supper after the lecture, and to that end she caused some sausages to be fried and laid on mashed potatoes, and prepared a dish with her own fair hands, called apple turnovers.

"And very glad he will be of it, my dear, no doubt; for I dare say it's not often that he has a good supper now, for they say he's as poor as a church rat."

The Rev. Athanasius looked up with feeble wonder.

"And what do you think, Athanasius, my dear, of our sending him that fowl as hangs up in the larder and a basket of our keeping apples? Don't you think that would be a pretty way of paying him?"

"Don't think of such a thing, mother," said the fretful little man. "Oh dear, I hope you won't hint at it before him by way of payment. What an affront!"

"Well, I'm sure, what a fluster you're in, Athanasius! You needn't colour up so. Isn't pride one of the deadly sins? A Christian man ought to be meek, and not above *excepting* a benefit."

"If he wouldn't mind it I should. Many and many's the time he's stopped at the vestry on his way from morning service and taken me back with him to dinner to save me the lonely, wet walk. He made me welcome to his books; and you know, mother, after I had that illness he came and drove me out every day."

"And yet you won't let me give him so much as an apple?"

"Not if I can help it."

Mr. Dreux presently came in, and perceiving the preparations made for him, did not like to disappoint Mrs. Brown. He accordingly sat down to supper, though it was very little past eight o'clock, and the good woman began to ply him with eatables and drinkables, being determined that for once he should have a good meal, for she laboured under the idea that in his lodgings he probably had but short commons.

Having done the greatest justice that he possibly could to the supper, he stayed a while to talk to Athanasius. The poor man looked most dismal, with his face swelled and his eyes dull and heavy, but Mrs. Brown observed that he soon cheered up as their guest continued to chat with him; she also observed that he watched the maid

with considerable attention while she cleared the table, and put away two or three articles of plate in a corner cupboard.

As soon as he could he took his leave, came home, and gave young Greyson his lesson. When it was over he inquired of his pupil whether he had sold his plate?

Young Greyson, with some confusion, replied in the negative.

"Then," said Mr. Dreux, "something that happened to-night is the more unaccountable. I could have declared—I think I could have taken my oath, that among the plate I made over to you was a mustard-pot which I have used for years. It is made in the shape of a barrel, and has my arms and my motto upon it."

"Most assuredly there was such a mustard-pot," said his pupil, aroused to interest.

"Your remark only shows how much two disinterested witnesses may be mistaken, for this very night I used my own identical old mustard-pot at Mrs. Brown's, with my motto and cypher upon it."

"Are you quite certain—are you sure of the fact?"

"Quite certain. There could be no manner of doubt on the subject. So, my dear fellow, we are both wrong, and that mustard-pot must have been sold with my modern plate. If you look when you go home you will not find it."

"I am quite convinced it was in the chest," said Wilfred, abstractedly.

"And I am quite certain that it was on Mrs. Brown's table to-night. The moment I took up the old familiar thing, the motto stared me in the face, —'I Dreux to me honour.' You need not look incredulous. It is so."

"I'll go and ask the old lady where she got it, and whether she has any more. I not only can, but will, take my oath that that mustard-pot was *here* on the night when I wrote my name on the box."

"And do you mean to say you have missed it since?" asked his host, surprised at the vehemence of his manner.

Wilfred admitted that he had, and that his suspicions fell on the lodger,—adding that that was why he had been so anxious to find out where he was gone, and to examine his room.

"Then," said Dreux, "we must have left that mustard-pot about the room without observing it; for of course if he had opened the box he would not have taken that and nothing more."

Young Greyson made no answer.

"I hope you did not miss anything else, Greyson?" asked Mr. Dreux.

"Oh, I found the box quite full," returned his pupil, feeling his ears tingle and his cheeks burn. "But I shall go to-morrow to Mrs. Brown, and ask

her where she bought that mustard-pot. With this clue we may possibly trace him and find out where Dickson is. What am I to prepare, Mr. Dreux, for to-morrow night?"

But Mr. Dreux's suspicions being once aroused, he was not to be put off with any half-confidences, and he questioned Wilfred so closely, that at last he was compelled to confess how, when he opened the box, he found nothing within but some heavy books, ten bath-bricks, and a hearth-brush.

Mr. Dreux did not receive the communication with half so much equanimity as his pupil could have wished.

"I am extremely sorry," said Wilfred, "quite as sorry as you can possibly be; but now that we have got a clue I shall take all possible pains to follow it up."

Mr. Dreux sat silent.

"I have already made many inquiries in an underhand way," proceeded Greyson, "and to-morrow I shall set to work in good earnest and try to recover my property."

"Your property!" repeated Mr. Dreux, remarking the slight emphasis with which he uttered these words.

"Yes, to be sure," said Greyson, taking out the piece of paper, and reading from it the list of articles, "my property, which I bought, and which has been stolen from me."

"Your property, which you paid for and never

possessed. I blame myself exceedingly that I promised to keep the thing secret. What a position I shall be in if this man cannot be found! Give me that paper, Greyson."

"I shall do no such thing," replied Greyson, thrusting it into his coat-pocket, and hastily buttoning it up.

"But I desire you to let me have it back."

"Why, I am sorry to refuse; but how, without it (if I should get back this property), am I to prove that it really is mine, that the former owner really and actually sold it, parted with all interest in it, and received a fair price in return?"

In spite of his distress, Mr. Dreux could not restrain a faint smile when Greyson said this, and the boy went on, as composedly as possible,—

"When people are so excessively anxious to have everything made plain and distinct, and when they distrust other people's straightforward, honest intentions in trade and barter, and are afraid they shall have their goods thrust back upon them by means of some beggarly quibble or other, they sometimes find that, in self-defence, the purchaser becomes as deep as themselves; if they cannot trust their fellow-creatures without documents, the documents must be produced against them. That property is mine. If any one says it is not, let us go to law at once, and I will prove it in open court. Here is the list of the articles, with the signatures of buyer and seller. I should hope I'm not going to

be cheated out of my property because I'm 'under age."

Mr. Dreux laughed, but so painfully that it forced tears into his eyes.

"Give it me," he said, "if you have any regard for my peace."

"I haven't the least"—

"No, don't joke; let us call this a loan, and let me pay interest."

"I can't think of it. Really I wonder, Mr. Dreux, that you should try to take advantage of my youth in this way. You don't consider the fun I shall have in ferretting out this lodger. Would you, now, have given it up at my age?—tamely made over your rights to another, instead of setting out in search of your property yourself?"

"Will you behave like a man?"

"There's only one man present; if I imitate his conduct, I shall act in a most unreasonable manner. I think, rather than that, I will still practise the innocent simplicity so becoming my age."

"Well, if there is nothing to be done with you, go on with your problems."

Greyson did as he was desired; but just as he had settled again to his work, there was a loud ring at the bell, and the landlady showed up Mr. Hewly. The fortnight of warm weather had completely set him up again. With health had come spirit, and he came in with his nerves or his temper evidently strung up for something more than common.

He had been to dine at the Fergusons'. This young Greyson knew, and he thought, from his highly irritable state, that something must have greatly annoyed him. He thought it would be no pleasure to him to see his tormentor that night, but he did not go ; he merely took up his compasses and began an ornamental design upon a piece of paper, while the vicar proceeded to unfold his mission.

This was soon done. He was evidently highly excited. He produced a paper containing a list of engagements, the duty for the week, funerals, &c., informed his curate that he was going out for a week, and requested, or rather laid his commands upon him to perform it.

Mr. Dreux bore his insolence of manner with perfect calmness.

"There, Sir," said Hewly, tossing another paper towards him, "and you will be so good as see this attended to."

Wilfred looked up, amazed. Mr. Dreux took it up and said, "This, I perceive, is a form of prayer to be used by the mistress on dismissing the school." Having looked it over, he laid it down, leaned back in his chair, and began to mend a pen.

Hewly's irritation increased. "Yes, Sir, you are right," he retorted, "it is a form of prayer ; and I suppose, though I have been called a formalist, I should scarcely be justified in flinging aside forms altogether."

The Curate made no answer, and only showed his

astonishment by a slight, involuntary elevation of the eyebrows.

But Wilfred was by no means inclined to let his insolence pass so quietly. He did not like him, but he despised him too much to be seriously angry with him. "Give him the opportunity," he thought, "and he'll soon make himself ridiculous." He accordingly said, with a smile of apparent good humour,—

"I believe, Mr. Hewly, it was one of our own old Divines who said, that while we 'cultivate the form, we must not neglect the spirit.' He was a nice old gentleman, but he afterwards fell into the hands of the Roman Catholics, who sweetly and piously burnt him alive."

"Greyson," exclaimed Mr. Dreux, astonished at his absurd remark, "do you ever think of the old saying, 'Let us be silent, for so are the gods?'"

"Sir," said Mr. Hewly, starting up, and speaking to Greyson, "I don't know what you mean. All I can collect is, that you mean to affront me, Sir. (Mr. Hewly was always very lavish of the title of honour when he was in a passion.) If you have no respect for me as your spiritual superior, I should have expected you might have shown some respect for yourself, Sir."

On hearing this, Greyson lifted up his compasses, and, having examined the point, began to design a figure, with an easy smile.

"Sir," exclaimed Hewly, addressing his curate,

and stuttering with passion, "your—your—your—pupil's worthy of his master."

"I am sorry he has purposely annoyed you," was the reply, "and if I understand him aright, I believe he will apologize."

"I have much pleasure in apologizing," said Wilfred, looking up with the same smile, "since Mr. Dreux wishes it; and I am sorry I have annoyed him by annoying you."

"Greyson," said Mr. Dreux, in a low voice, as he again went on with his figure, while Hewly stormed at them both with surprising violence, "I cannot consider that this is acting either like a gentleman or a Christian."


"Sir," cried Hewly, "I'm much obliged to you, but I don't want you to take up my quarrels."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Hewly. I am sorry I have annoyed you," said Wilfred, and then muttered to himself, "particularly when I have such a different example before me."

"Ever since I first saw you, Sir," proceeded Mr. Hewly, now too angry to care what he said, "you have opposed and thwarted me by all means in your power, even the most unjustifiable."

"Some people think the end justifies the means," replied Greyson, forgetting himself again, and astonished that Hewly should have alluded to his wooing. "I had a very good end in view."

Here Mr. Dreux, not knowing what would be said next, started up, and taking a candle, said,



"Mr. Hewly, as my pupil has apologized, you will excuse my lighting him down stairs; it is long past his time. He ought to be at home, and the sooner the better."

"You have spoken the truth for once, Sir," replied Mr. Hewly. "Your influence tells quite enough upon him without his having more of it than usual."

"Spoken the truth for once!" exclaimed Mr. Dreux, for the first time thrown off his guard. "What do you mean by that?"

"It's your turn to apologize now," said Wilfred, passionately, "and the sooner you do it the better. Will you, or will you not?"

"I shall do nothing at the bidding of a boy like you," replied Hewly; "and I hope to make you repent of this before long. No, Sir; I will not apologize."

"Very well," said his curate, looking steadily at him, "I shall not urge it upon you; there is no use in arguing with a man in a passion; but you will excuse my remaining in your presence any longer." So saying, he took young Greyson by the arm, opened his bed-room door, and shut himself and his pupil in.

Hewly being thus left alone, stood for a few seconds irresolute on the rug, then he snatched up his hat and made the best of his way down stairs, slamming the street-door after him so as sufficiently to apprise them of his exit.

and stuttering with passion they emerged again
pupil's worthy of his name a fool I was not to hold

"I am sorry he is

the reply, "and indeed they were still flushed with the
he will apologize surprise that his vicar's con-

"I have no objection," said, but he sat down quietly by
fred, looking at nothing.

Dreux was very evident," continued Greyson, "that
him by no means on purpose to annoy you; but I am

"I have given him the opportunity. Hewly in a
as I wouldn't have believed it unless I had

It's my belief he had taken too much

"Well, think no more of it," was the reply.

"You have now to think of recovering this stolen
silver and the ring. You must leave this contention
to me. In my opinion, the first thing you have to
do is to obtain what information you can from Mrs.
Brown as to the person from whom she bought the
mustard-pot. The next thing is to tell your uncle
all about this affair. I deeply regret that I per-
mitted you to make the purchase unknown to him."

"I would not have made it on any other terms."

"Now, good night. Let me know to-morrow
evening what success you have had."

The pupil then took his leave. The host sat up,
lost in thought; he had now an additional weight
on his mind; he believed he must leave his curacy
at once. He could not stay without some apology
from Hewly, and yet he was greatly attached to

the people among whom he had laboured so long, and it was very hard to leave them to such a successor.

At ten o'clock the next morning he received the following note from Hewly,—its formality, no less than its contents, perfectly astonished him:—

“The Rev. Brigson Hewly presents his compliments to the Rev. A. C. Dreux, and sends him the books connected with the almshouse accounts.

“Mr. Hewly is sensible that the unchristian conduct of another party induced him last night to betray too much heat in repressing it. He therefore thinks it most consistent with Christian meekness to apologize, and to assure Mr. Dreux that the events of last night shall never be alluded to by him in future.

“*Tuesday morning.*”

Mr. Dreux's first impulse was to toss this impertinent apology into the fire. On second thoughts he resolved to put it away, but not to answer it. He saw that Hewly was determined he should not throw up the curacy, and have it in his power to say that it was in consequence of *his* refusal to apologize for having insulted him; at the same time he wished to word his apology so that it should rather widen the breach between them.

Notwithstanding, it *was* an apology; so he decided not to take any steps at present about

leaving the curacy; and he anticipated one quiet week, at least, in the absence of his vicar.

In the middle of the day he called on Wilfred, and was shown into his little study. Both his injunctions had been obeyed; but the affair had only been laid before Mr. Paton upon his giving a promise of secrecy.

"I've found out why Hewly was in such a passion," said Greyson. "My aunt told me that, during the evening, it came out that Helen had been to confession,—at least it seemed so. My aunt did not give a very distinct account of it, nor could she tell how Helen, being still a professed Protestant, could confess to a Catholic priest; but it seems she must have done something tantamount to it, for they talked about her having received absolution from Hewly's friend, the Irish Roman Catholic priest."

"And this is the result of Hewly's teaching. I am not very much surprised"—

"But Hewly was; he had no idea she would go so far beyond him. He was horrified, as well he might be; for if she professes herself a Roman Catholic, she cannot do such an inconsistent thing as to marry him. And if he becomes one himself, he shuts himself out from marriage altogether."

"Poor man,—I pity him. I think I can excuse his rudeness of last night."

"I do not pity him, for I believe he is only

looking out for a rich wife. Helen now talks a great deal more about 'Father Macauley' than about him. While Hewly was ill, he very much lost his influence over her weak, fickle mind. She is so wild and headstrong, that, if she thinks she ought to become a Roman Catholic, she will profess herself one, however soon she may see fit to turn round again. Still, I think she has a strong liking for Hewly."

"Then, if he is engaged to her, he may very likely declare that he considers it his duty to fulfil the engagement."

"Ah, but they are not engaged," said Greyson. "Helen's father would not allow that; though it is an understood thing that, if neither should change, they may be married in a year from last November, which makes Hewly's chance small." He then proceeded to tell Mr. Dreux that, in case he could find any clue as to where the lodger was concealed, his uncle had promised to let him set out himself in search of him. Frank Maidley was to go with him. He painted the delight of such an expedition in glowing terms, and declared that the adventures he hoped to meet with would more than indemnify him for his loss. "In fact," he concluded, "if we are to find it at all, I hope it will not be for a good long while."

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. THERESA DREUX.

It was not till the day before Mr. Hewly's expected return that young Greyson found out anything of the lodger which his uncle thought worth investigating.

Directly after breakfast the next morning he made his appearance at Mr. Dreux's lodgings, completely disguised by an enormous pair of whiskers, a light great-coat, and a red comforter.

"What is this absurd disguise for?" asked Mr. Dreux, when he recognised him.

"Why, of course I don't want him to know me."

"Know you,—he has never seen you."

"Oh, that does not at all matter; we wish to have a little fun. You should see Frank; I am certain his own mother wouldn't know *him*."

"Where are you now going?—tell me that."

"Oh, a long way; it's a secret *where*. In fact, we don't exactly know where we may have to go. Now I'm off,—don't you wish me success?"

"Most certainly. But I am just as certain what kind of success you will have, as—well, I do not wish to damp you. Pray let me hear often what you are about; I shall be very uneasy about you till I see you again."

"Oh, I shall write," cried the pupil, and he ran off in high spirits, while Mr. Dreux applied himself to his letters, which lay unopened before him. He hoped to find one from Elinor; it was so long since she had written that he had begun to feel uneasy. Instead of this, there was one in his aunt's hand-writing, which rather startled him, and he broke it open hastily, and read as follows :—

"MY DEAR ARTHUR,—

"I am sure you will be glad to hear that Elinor has had rather a better night; and Doctor King thinks her no worse this morning. So do not be alarmed; for, as I always say, when young people are ill, you know they have youth on their side. And I have said, over and over again, to Elinor,—‘My dear, why don't you write and tell Arthur how poorly you are?’ but she doesn't like to distress you, which seems natural. And, as I said to her yesterday, ‘What a mistake it is, my dear, for he must be far more anxious than if he knew the truth,—which, Dr. King says, should never be concealed from the friends of a patient.’ And so I asked him point blank whether you hadn't better

be told, and he replied,—‘By all means. I am surprised it has not been done before.’

“ So I thought I would write, my dear Arthur, to relieve your anxiety, for I do not like to have all the responsibility myself; and as Elinor gets weaker every day, and takes nothing but rusks soaked in wine and water, don’t you think it would be much better for you to come over and see her, for all the advice I have for her does not seem to do her any good; and if she *has* anything on her mind,—I’m sure I don’t know why they should think so,—but perhaps she might tell it to you and feel relieved.

“ My dear Arthur, you know how weak and bad my eyes are, and Dr. King says they will never be any better, nor at my age is it to be expected; but as I had said to Elinor, ‘My dear, I will certainly write,’ I thought I would put myself out of the way to do it. And you have always been a very fond brother to her, though it is shocking to think how rude you used to make her when she was a child,—I never shall forget it,—and teach her to climb, and fish, and all sorts of things not proper for a girl. But, as I said, you could have the blue room, you know, and the little boudoir off Elinor’s dressing-room for a study, just as you used to do when you were at college.

“ So I hope you will not disappoint Elinor if you can possibly help it, for now she is confined to her bed she is, of course, very dull.

“ She told me before she went to sleep to give

her dear love to you ; and believe me, my dear Arthur,

“ Your affectionate aunt,

“ ELINOR THERESA DREUX.

“ P.S. Dr. King says these slow fevers are often very obstinate. I told him I had asked you to come. He is a very disagreeable man, and says that ought to have been done a week ago.”

He read this unaccountable letter to its close, and then, leaning back in his chair, a faint vertigo for a moment almost deprived him of his senses. He presently recovered himself sufficiently to rise and open the window ; then a wretched half-hour passed before he could decide what was best to be done. That Elinor was ill was only too evident, but the extent of her illness he remained in doubt of. He knew his aunt too well not to be aware that Elinor might be at the point of death before she would take sufficient alarm to rouse herself to any decided line of action ; it was a great deal to have herself written to request him to come to his sister. To go instantly to Leamington was his decision. Hewly would return in a few hours. He therefore wrote a letter, to be sent to his house, explaining his absence and its cause.

The journey was one of two hundred miles, but great part of the way was by cross country roads, so that he did not reach his destination till the middle of the next day. The nervous excitement

caused by this ambiguous letter was almost past endurance. It was quite a relief, on looking up to his aunt's windows, to find them unclosed.

The servant who ushered him in volunteered the information that his sister was better.

"Bless me, Arthur, how pale you look!" cried his aunt, meeting him at the door of the dining-room. "Bring some wine, Gorden. Why, of course, my dear Arthur, you cannot go up-stairs yet, while Dr. King's here; so sit down, and don't think of such a thing."

His aunt's vague communication fretted him almost past endurance, and he threw himself into a seat to wait for the physician, looking so ill that the old lady began to ply him with questions about his own health.

The physician presently returned; was glad Mr. Dreux was come,—thought his patient no worse,—she had a great deal of low fever,—she was certainly in some danger,—he might presently go up and see her,—she had been got up, and was lying on the sofa.

"He must not go, Doctor, while he has that pale, eager look,—he would frighten her out of her senses," said Mrs. Elinor Theresa. "You look as if you had been turned to stone. Come nearer the fire, Arthur. Are you cold? Dear me, how nonsensical I am!—perhaps you haven't dined. Are you hungry, Arthur?"

"My dear Sir," said the sympathizing physician,

"I assure you I quite expect to see your sister better to-morrow."

"Ah! well, Arthur, I'm glad to see you beginning to look like flesh and blood again. Didn't I tell you when I wrote not to be uneasy? My dear Doctor, they were always so very fond of each other. As for Elinor, she constantly says, 'If I could only see my brother I should be happy.'"

"Well, Madam," said Dr. King, rather testily, "and she will see him directly, and be all the better for it, I dare say."

"I wish to go up at once," said Mr. Dreux; "I must see my sister directly."

"Not till you have taken a glass of wine and a biscuit;—it would excite my patient to see you looking so pale."

The glass of wine was hastily swallowed, and Mrs. Theresa Dreux showed her nephew up stairs. As she walked to Elinor's door she talked on subjects strangely at variance with his feelings.

"Wait here for a moment," she said, "I must just go into the room first and prepare her."

He sat down in Elinor's dressing-room while his aunt went into the bed-room beyond.

"You may come in, Arthur," she presently said, and he quietly entered.

Elinor was reclining on a very low couch, close to the window. She wore a wrapping white dress. Her face was pallid, and her features attenuated and tense. As he entered she half-raised herself into

a sitting position, and he knelt down by the couch the better to receive her in his arms. Elinor laughed with hysterical joy as she put her thin arms round him; but presently his face sunk heavily, and as she held him, she fell back on the pillows, and said, with a terrified glance, "Help me, aunt, Arthur has fainted!"

Her aunt wrung her hands, and ran about looking for a smelling-bottle; the maid shrieked at the top of the stairs for a glass of water; but, happily for all parties, Dr. King came speedily up. He had been very doubtful as to the result of the interview, and fully expected to find Elinor in a swoon, instead of which he found her sitting up with a strength he had not given her credit for, supporting her brother's head, while her aunt and maid ran hither and thither, a perfect picture of helplessness and inefficiency.

He soon relieved Elinor of her burden, and, the proper remedies being applied, the patient opened his eyes.

"Bless me, ma'am!" exclaimed the maid, crying and sobbing, "I never saw a gentleman faint before!"

Elinor, sitting up on her sofa, watched their proceedings with the utmost anxiety. Her brother's face gradually resumed something like its natural hue, while her aunt, holding the smelling-bottles, exclaimed against the world in general for all the dreadful things that happened when nobody expected

them ; and against Elinor in particular, for being ill and frightening her brother ; then against the said brother, for causing her a palpitation of the heart, and disappointing her expectations. " For I have always said," continued this wise woman, " that if there was a man in the world who possessed perfect self-command, it was my nephew. I have said to Elinor times out of mind, ' Elinor, my dear, if you were to cut his hand off he would never shed a tear ; he wouldn't jump, not if fifty guns were to go off close to him ! Such nerves ! Elinor, my dear, don't you remember that review ? ' Why, bless me, Morris, how the water trickles down this poplin dress of mine. Make haste to get a towel and wipe it."

The physician, who seemed to be a man of a crusty temper, looked daggers at the good lady ; and then, his face suddenly changing, he said something kind and encouraging to Elinor, and gave her brother leave to rise.

The two females had drenched his hair with water ; the physician took the towel from the maid, without apology or remark, and began to dry it for him.

" Now," he said, in a whisper, " don't imagine that all this has done my poor little patient any harm,—quite the contrary. I told her the other day, that if the house were to take fire, she would find strength to run out of it. She wants rousing. I hope this will prove a little stimulus, poor child !"

"Are you better now, dearest?" said Elinor tenderly, as he stooped over her to kiss her; "but ah! how thin you are, Arthur—how cold your cheek is; you have been ill too!"

"No, I am quite well, Elinor; my fainting was nothing but a foolish mistake. I see you are much better than I thought."

"I shall be better now you are come, dear; but oh! I am so tired."

"And no wonder," interposed the crusty doctor. "Madam, I wish Miss Dreux to be put to bed immediately; she is exhausted, and quite hysterical. And you, Sir, come away at once. You are not to see her again till you have had a good meal and an hour's rest. Travelled all night, and eaten nothing to-day, I'll be bound; and then fainting away! Parcel of silly old women frightened him to death! Bah! Come away, Sir; I'll have no kissing and hanging over my patients. Done her a great deal of good, though,—but that's mum."

This speech was not all uttered aloud, and during its delivery the old gentleman looked with strong disfavour at the mistress and maid, who were still occupied with the purple poplin gown.

"Madam, are you going to undress that young lady; or must I fetch up the cook to do it?"

"Now really, Doctor King!"

"Will you do it, then, ma'am? Now, Sir, come away. What did you mean by going off in that

style? A fine, strong young man like you! Did you do it for experiment—Eh?

"I don't know what I meant by it," was the reply. "If it was an experiment, I hope I shall never repeat it as long as I live. I found it anything but an agreeable one."

This conversation took place as they descended the stairs.

"I'll be bound that old woman mystified you nicely when she asked you to come here. I had great work to get her to write at all. Parcel of silly old women! I've no patience with them."

"My aunt's letter certainly tortured me a good deal; it was extremely vague."

"Well, the fact of the matter is, she's very poorly, there's no denying that; but, in my opinion, she has something on her mind, and if you can get her to talk of it, you'll do her a service—but not for the next few days, she's too weak at present. I dare say you hardly expected to find her alive when you got here."

"I scarcely knew what to think."

"Ah, I saw what kind of a demon had been gnawing and worrying at your heart! You shall hear the downright truth from me every day. Never mind what that old woman says; she frets me almost out of my life. I wonder whether that poor child's in bed yet. Well, Sir, good day. My advice to you is, that you eat a good dinner, take a

couple of glasses of port, and leave the rest to Providence."

With these remarks the Doctor took his leave.

Elinor was too weak to see him again that day, but while she slept he came and looked at her. Her face was painfully thin—strangely altered, but in sleep the anxious expression which had shocked him so much was not apparent. Her small hand lay on the counterpane; every little bone was visible. When in health it had often looked whiter; for now through the too transparent skin every purple and lilac and crimson vein was distinctly traceable. She was wasted to a skeleton. He thought he should scarcely have known her; yet he took comfort from the maid's assurance, that she was sleeping much more comfortably than usual.

He saw her several times the next day and the next: she seemed feverish, and could not talk. His heart sank within him as he watched the gradual failure of her strength, appetite, and interest even in him. They were never left alone, and she seemed to care for nothing; yet she was dressed daily, and laid on her couch, and seemed none the worse for that slight exertion.

It was not till the fourth day that they were left alone together. Elinor had been more than usually lethargic during the morning, but she no sooner saw the door shut on her aunt and maid than she

seemed to revive. She was lying on her couch, and asked him to sit by her and hold her in his arms. She was so quiet that he fancied she was asleep. She had nestled close to him, and while he supported her hope grew strong within him; she was at length left to his influence: he thought he could soothe her. Now was an opportunity; but while he hesitated to begin talking to her, she showed him strongly the cause of her illness and the direction of her thoughts. She put her hand so gently upon his waistcoat pocket, that if he had not been alive to her motive he would not have observed it. That was not the right one. The thin fingers presently found the other, and very softly drew something out, and opened it. There was a very long silence. Elinor soothed herself with gazing at Allerton's picture. She seemed scarcely aware that he could see her. Tears began to fall upon it, then she sobbed, but still neither of them said a word.

It was too evident to him now what was the matter. He felt himself powerless, far more so than he really was. He drew her still nearer, and entreated her not to weep. The sound of his voice seemed to recal her to herself, and she asked him first, with a burst of tears, why he had kept his trials so much to himself—why he had concealed them from her, who loved him, or at least spoken so lightly of them? and then, why had he never told

her anything about Mr. Allerton—never even mentioned his name.

It was bitterness to him to be compelled to admit that he had nothing to tell—nothing whatever, but that he had wrung out of Hewly that Allerton spoke of himself as active and doing duty, therefore he must be in health wherever he was.

To his surprise, Elinor received this scanty intelligence with lively gratitude. She did not want to see him,—she could do without even knowing whether he still cared for her,—if he was safe and well it was enough. She could live now, she could even be happy; but to go on week after week not knowing whether some long illness or some lingering death might have kept him away from Westport, was more than she could bear.

She lay silent for a while with the miniature in her hand,—something of the tranquillity of those endeared features seemed to pass to her own heart, and the manly affection they expressed soothed her as if the original had looked so at herself.

"I feel much better now—far stronger. I think it was hope that I wanted," she said, "and some one to love me and comfort me as you do, Arthur."

"My darling! what hope did you want, Elinor?"

"Not the hope of seeing him again. I wanted hope *for* him—hope that he might be happy—even hope that he might forget *me*, if that would make him happy."

Her fit of weeping, far from exhausting her, seemed to have brought relief and tranquillity. She would not let her brother leave her, but still retaining the little portrait, began tenderly to upbraid him for having concealed the state of his health from her. She confessed that she had written to Mrs. Dorothy when first he lost his property, and from time to time had heard from her a full account of all that had happened, and that he had endeavoured to conceal.

"We have each made a mistake, my sweet Elinor," said he; "we should have done better to have trusted each other."

"Ah, yes! I have drooped for months for want of knowing the whole truth respecting you and Mr. Allerton, and now you have endured a much greater shock than if I had told you frankly how ill I was."

Her brother said nothing; he felt that in his earnest desire to spare her he had inflicted a great deal. But though there was so little that was cheering to be communicated, Elinor was surprisingly the better for the conversation. She absolutely required sympathy,—her brother could give it, and she revived like a watered flower; it drew her thoughts in some degree from their aching pining after the absent to have something present to love. The mere sound of her brother's voice was healing to her—it calmed and comforted her; and when he came each night to pray beside her, how-

ever restless she might have been, she would drop away to sleep after it like a weary child.

This quiet sleep, to which she had long been a stranger, did her more good than medicines or restoratives. Each day she could sit up longer, and though still a mere skeleton, she had already lost the transparent whiteness which characterized her complexion when first her brother saw her. In the full confidence of being understood, she unburdened her mind of all the tormenting thoughts which had oppressed her nearly to death, and received from him an assurance that he would never conceal any of his trials from her again.

"And has nothing happened," she went on, recurring to the old theme,— "has nothing happened to give you the slightest clue to Mr. Allerton's feeling?"

Her brother sighed; he scarcely knew what to do for the best. It was evident she *could* not forget; then, perhaps, it was better she should think favourably of his friend.

"I can scarcely think anything has happened, Elinor," he replied; "and yet, if you would not lay too much stress upon it, I would tell you something which I fancied might be of his doing. Do not lay too much stress upon it, my dear; it is but a trifle, and I fear lest the relation of it should make you fancy me more to be pitied than I really am. You know, Elinor, all our circumstances are of God's

appointment ; ‘*Howetteth up one, and putteth down another.*’ Things are changed with me, but that is no matter. You remember those two little cabinet pictures which used to hang in my dressing-room,—small landscapes ?”

“O yes, perfectly.”

“And you know that all my pictures were put up for sale, Elinor ?”

“All your pictures ! What, the good ones,—even our old family pictures, Arthur ?”

“All, my dear. Well, these two little ones would not sell for anything like their value, so they were withdrawn, and I sent them to London to a picture-dealer. I heard nothing of them for some time. They were great favourites with Allerton, but he used to object to the frames ; he said they were not deep enough, and I had promised that I would shortly have them altered. Just before Christmas, word was sent me that they were sold, and I paid the last of my bills with the money. The night before I came here I found a box at my lodgings, directed to me ; on unpacking, I beheld my favourite pictures, in just such frames as Allerton had described. There was no note,—nothing but the direction for me to examine, the writing of which was not like his ; it was disguised. I tore the card off ; the name on the other side was carefully inked over.”

“And why, then, do you think they came from Mr. Allerton ?” asked Elinor. “Let me hear all

you know. What a pleasure it would be to me if I could think so too! It would be a proof that he still thought of you."


Her brother was surprised at the eagerness with which she caught at this slight hope, but he went on to tell her all he had reasoned out on the subject. "If any of my friends at Westport," he said, "had wished to give me some favourite possession out of my old house, they would not have thought of waiting so many months: and would they have chosen the only things which were sent away to be disposed of? Besides, I do not remember telling to any one Allerton's fancy for these two pictures, nor the kind of frames he wished them to have."

"I know the kind you mean; he had several prints so framed. They were invented by a man whom he used to patronize."

"Yes; so that, on the whole, I feel quite inclined to think they came from him."

Elinor fully believed it, and this shadow of a hope that he still retained a friendly feeling for her brother was enough for her imaginative mind to work upon. She might see him again, at least she might hear of him; there was no such quarrel between them that it was impossible they could ever be reconciled,—no estrangement which time and change might not remove.

Elinor felt and acknowledged herself better. Her brother's visit had been just in time. She was sinking under the double anxiety of ignorance



respecting Allerton, and certainty that he himself was concealing his real state from her.

He stayed with her a week, and though she had several relapses, she was so much improved that her physician said he might now leave her with safety. After their first conversation, they had many others. Elinor did not let her brother leave her till he had promised her that, as soon as she was well enough, she should come and visit him in his lodgings; but first she was to go to the sea-side, and as her recovery was slow, it would be some time before this could be effected.

Elinor bore the parting tolerably well, both from him and the picture. He thought it would be a cruel kindness to leave it with her, and as he did not offer it, she would not ask it.

She was far more hopeful than he was about herself; and when he had prayed with her, and commended her to God, she smiled, as he bent over her to kiss her, and said cheerfully, "Good by, dearest, I begin to be full of hope that we shall soon see happier days."

"If we can entirely acquiesce in the will of our heavenly Father, we shall see happier days," he replied; "there is no peace like that which arises from leaving all things in His hands, and saying, 'Undertake for us.'"

He left her feeling more easy, for he knew she would have every luxury and comfort that money could supply,—every indulgence but that of fellow-

feeling, and every luxury but that of being understood.

He lamented this, but he could not remove her from her aunt, for he had no house to offer her ; and during the old lady's lifetime she was entirely dependent upon her, though, by the terms of her grandfather's will, she was to inherit a very sufficient fortune at her death.

He had been away twelve days, and though he had written twice to Hewly, he had received no answer. He therefore feared that he might be ill, or that he might not have returned at the time expected. He took leave of Elinor, intending to travel all night, but he thought he must steal up stairs to look at her again. She was already asleep, and looked calm and happy. He touched her hand, and she moved slightly. He felt that he could now leave her with comfort ; and not much relishing his aunt's letters, he called her maid aside, and giving her his address, desired her to write immediately, if anything should be amiss. When a great and new anxiety starts suddenly forward, it annihilates for the time those which had previously existed. Elinor's illness had banished for the time all his other difficulties ; but now, as he journeyed homeward, they gradually returned upon him, and resumed their old sway.

First, there was his anxiety about Wilfred. He thought him by far too young, too full of spirits, and too careless to have been sent out on such a mission, and get, in all probability, among thieves and

ruffians. Secondly, he had by some means to procure the remaining 200*l.*, which in a few weeks must be paid in for the use of the almshouses. Thirdly, there was Hewly's conduct, which was a source of endless trouble and annoyance, the more so as for at least another month he believed it was his duty to bear it. Fourthly, he would fain have been able to return young Greyson the money he had paid him, but there were other things to be done before that; it was the least of his anxieties.

His eyes, as he drew near the scene of his labours, became clouded, and his breast laden with these various depressing thoughts. He had written to his landlady to say at what hour he expected to return, but he did not expect any one to meet him; he was therefore surprised to find her waiting for him at the station, as well as her son,—a lad of fifteen,—and behind them Mr. What's-his-name Brown.

There was in the manner of this last a kind of contempt, as he pushed the others back, seized the carpet-bag, and gave it to the boy.

"Glad to see you, I'm sure, Sir," said his landlady, curtseying.

The bag was received with a humble, crest-fallen air, and the Rev. Athanasius scowled at the obsequious landlady, as she rubbed her hands and continued to curtsey.

"If you'll allow me, Mr. Dreux," he then said, with the slight air of deference with which he generally addressed his brother clergymen, "if it's

not an intrusion, I shall be glad to walk home with you."

They soon reached the house. Mr. Brown came in, and, with a good deal of hesitation of manner, hoped he would not be offended, but his landlady, when that morning he had called to return a book which he had borrowed, had informed him that she never expected to see Mr. Dreux again, "which," she said, "is a great misfortune to me, Sir, for Mr. Dreux owes me a bill of 3*l.* 15*s.*"

"I thought, Sir," continued Mr. Brown, in his usual voice, at once discontented and deferential,— "I thought I would come with her to meet you and tell you this. She said you were supposed not to have any intention of returning. Now, Sir, you have evidently some enemy, for she never could have taken such a wild fancy into her head of her own accord. In fact,—I hope you will excuse my mentioning it,—but I found her with some silver forks and spoons, which, she said, you had in common use. She was going to take them to a silver-smith, to ascertain whether they were worth the money."

Mr. Dreux felt excessively shocked and annoyed.

"I hope my having returned at the time I appointed will be supposed sufficient to exonerate me from this charge," he remarked, with a slightly bitter smile. "My credit in Westport must have sunk low indeed if any person here can think I went away to avoid paying my debts."

Mr. Brown did not make any answer ; and having fulfilled what he considered a painful duty, was glad to take his leave.

Mr. Dreux thanked him, and, as soon as he was out of the house, rang the bell for his landlady, who presently appeared, looking rather frightened. He desired her to bring her bill, which she did at once, and he paid it out of some money that he had about him.

He did not think proper to ask any questions, and she left the room with many professions of sorrow, previously laying on the table a note in Hewly's handwriting, which he opened hastily, and read with no little wonder, not to say alarm. One remark of the good woman's rang unpleasantly in his ears as he went on : " She was sure she hoped he would not be offended, for she should never have believed the report if she hadn't heard it from them that ought to know."

The note began with several expressions of esteem, which, considering the source from which they came, were equally novel and alarming. The writer had heard with sorrow and amazement certain hints which he could not believe, and ought not to believe, of a man who had hitherto stood so high in public opinion ; and to *quiet the popular clamour* against him, which, during his absence, it had grieved him (Hewly) to hear, the said Mr. Hewly had thought it best, in Christian kindness, to take vigorous measures ; and as he had

no doubt of the perfect uprightness and honour of Mr. Dreux, he could not suppose that he was unprepared to meet the claims of the almshouses against him. He had no doubt, though Mr. D. had left the town suddenly, without explaining anything, that the money on which these aged people depended for their maintenance was ready, and that Mr. D. would not fail to produce it, and save them from beggary or the workhouse. Accordingly he (the said Hewly), as a proof of his friendship, had paid the money out of his own pocket (which was a little slip of the pen, for Mr. Ferguson had lent it him to make some alterations with in the vicarage previous to his marriage), to his curate's account, and hoped, that as soon as possible after his return, he would call on him and arrange matters, for it was an inconvenience to a man in his circumstances to lend the money, and it was only to save the character of a brother clergyman that he had done so, &c., &c.

As a foe, though a covert one, the curate was not afraid of his vicar, but he shrank from him with something like dread as he now saw him in the character of a false friend.

It wanted a fortnight to the time for producing this money. Why, then, had Hewly been so hasty in producing it, unless to get him into his power? And as to popular clamour, what could he mean by that and all the other insinuations contained in this abominable note?

He hurried on his hat and coat, and went straight to the Vicarage. He was a good deal excited, otherwise he might have observed, that though Hewly attempted to assume a tone of patronage, he looked pale and nervous. But he contrived to check much outward expression of these feelings, and perceiving that for once his curate was both angry and agitated, he felt his advantage; and bringing up the subject of his note, he again hinted, with a kind of offensive mildness, that it had been a great inconvenience to him to advance the money.

"I am sorry for it," replied his curate, with some heat; "it is also a great inconvenience to me."

"What!" exclaimed Hewly, "you are sorry?—sorry? Do you mean to say you wish things had been suffered to take their course?"

"Most certainly I do," was the reply; "I should have been glad to have been allowed to manage my own affairs myself."

"You will please to understand," replied Mr. Hewly, trying not to be afraid of his curate's rising anger,—*"you will please to understand, Sir, that, however unfortunately for me, this is, in fact, partly my own affair. I advanced the money, because, to have such things said of my curate, Sir, reflects, in some degree, upon me."* ("Now for it," he thought. "Oh, do get into a passion!—you're near it, I can see. Fire up, and I have you.")

"*Such things!*" repeated his curate, in a voice of thunder. "What things do you mean, Sir?"

Hewly felt a little nervous tremor; but he paused before he answered, and assumed an air of pious regret; he also put his hand to his head, as if it ached.

His curate repeated, passionately, "What things?"

("Now you'll do," thought Hewly; "I *dare* say the rest to you now. But when I've got you into a rage I hope I sha'n't turn coward.")

"What things?" he again repeated, lifting his sinister black eyes to his curate's face, and speaking with peculiar mildness, "they are things that do you no credit, Sir. It is said that you cannot pay your debts."

"I have heard that. What else?"

("I wish you would take your eyes off my face," thought Hewly. "And you're recovering your temper, worse luck!") He folded his arms, and tried to meet his curate's steady gaze. ("I'll make you wince before I've done, grand as you look. You shall not tower over me for nothing, with your birth, and your eloquence, and your beauty. I like to excite you,—I like to see your eyes flash. Now he's worked up enough. Slowly and steadily,—I'll have him.")

"If you must know, Sir, it has been whispered in this place, that if you had not *known* where the schoolmaster, Thomas Dickson, was gone, you would probably have taken some pains to ascertain it."

An eager movement of astonishment and indignation was all the answer he got for more than a minute,—a wretched minute, he thought,—during which his curate never released him from his penetrating gaze.

"*If* there is such a report current, Mr. Hewly," he then began.

"*If*," repeated the vicar, and began to quail, for he felt that he had not mastered him after all.

"I said *if*, Sir—*if* there is such a report current, I know of but one person who could have originated it."

"What do you mean by that, Sir," cried Hewly, now permitting himself the relief of a little bluster.

"Do you mean to make *me* accountable for the reports that are rife respecting you? Is it my fault, if when a man in debt goes off people say he will never return? Is it my fault if people say you are in league with this villain and knave, Dickson?"

"Enough, — I have heard enough," cried his curate, starting up. "Be silent. I will not endure another word. If you could tamely listen to calumnies so insulting as these, and never even contradict them, they lie at your door as much as if you had yourself invented and propagated them."

"That will do, Sir," replied the vicar, also rising. "I rejoice that I can now without a breach of Christian forbearance dissolve the bond between us. Our connexion is at an end. An unblemished

character, Sir, cannot be too highly valued ; none can despise it with impunity."

Stung by this insult, his curate darted a look at him which brought the blood up even into his cheeks ; but Hewly, though he felt a tremor through his whole frame, was cool. Nothing but compassion for the erring, and a mild reproof of his fault, was expressed in those virtuous lineaments. But it pleased him to see by the flashing eyes and quivering lips of his curate that he had him now sufficiently in his power to excite him to the utmost. Looking on, it was a balm to his heart to estimate the violence of the struggle by which he kept himself silent. He saw how indignation battled for the mastery, and that his face was colourless even to the lips, before it could be subdued.

"And what on earth is he staying for ?" thought the vicar ; but though a meek man, and, as he often said, desirous to forgive injuries, and not to exhibit pride, he felt extremely small when at length his victim rose, and with something of his own peculiar dignity, gave in his resignation, and, appointing to call on him the next morning, took his leave without deigning to notice his last remarks by a single word.

What Mr. Dreux thought as he walked home is impossible to describe. People do not think very collectedly when they have been first excited and then stunned. But why had Hewly been so hasty

about this money, and was it a preconcerted thing this forcing him to leave his curacy? Was it true that such reports were believed respecting him? and if so, did not Hewly want to make him leave the town before he had had time to live them down and leave it in debt to his enemy, who had his character at his mercy. The bank at that hour was closed, but he determined at once to pay back the money to Hewly. He could borrow it, and must pay the interest as best he could; but then he must leave Westport. There was no curacy vacant in the place, and it seemed plain that his usefulness there was over, and his influence also.

It was getting dark, and he felt with poignant regret that perhaps the dusk sheltered him from insult—at any rate from the suspicious looks of those whom he might meet.

That he individually should have been despised he thought might easily have been borne, but it was hard to suffer patiently the certainty that every thing he had ever taught, all he had laboured for, would suffer and go down with him. This crowning fear sunk his agitated spirits. Tired as he was he turned away from his lodgings, and sought the square of grass before mentioned as belonging to the almshouses, where in the gathering darkness he walked backwards and forwards, praying for direction in these new and overwhelming perplexities.

CHAPTER XXII.

LIGHT BREAKS THROUGH THE CLOUD.

MR. HEWLY sat at ease in his study, and sipped a cup of tea, while his late curate walked wearily up and down the square of grass under the black rocking trees. It was a wild, windy evening in March; the rain fell in half-frozen drops; the soaked grass did not rise after the foot had pressed it; the limes groaned and creaked like old fretful people; the gusty wind turned his umbrella, and he began to feel faint with fatigue and hunger, but no light seemed to dawn upon his path for all this thinking; and as he turned at last towards his lodgings he felt the necessity for quiet, warmth, and food, though the unsubdued restlessness of excitement craved bodily exercise still as a means of keeping it under.

He looked up to the window of his little lodgings; there he thought he could have quiet for the evening, to rest and consider what was to be done. He perceived the bright flickering of a fire within and the movement of a figure. He entered the house and

walked slowly up stairs. Some one in his room was blowing his fire with a pair of bellows and singing most cheerfully. He entered, and the singer turned and disclosed the features of young Greyson.

"Hurra!" cried that young gentleman, rushing up to him, and flourishing the bellows. "Here I am at last—a hero returned from his first campaign. But how dreadfully tired you look," he added, seeing his faint smile and worn appearance. "I hope Miss Dreux is no worse. I beg your pardon, I ought to have known better."

"No, go on talking," replied his host. "I am indeed glad to see you again. I had begun to be quite uneasy about you. My sister is daily improving." This was in answer to young Greyson's inquiring expression.

"What is the matter, then?" asked the pupil.

"Let me forget it for a while. I cannot talk just now. I am worn out, body and mind. Do stay with me this evening. I do not think I can give you a lesson, but nothing would do me so much good as to hear your adventures."

Wilfred agreed, and immediately began to excite a great bustle. He piled the sofa cushions into one corner; insisted that his host should sit down; took away his over-coat; then he drew the curtains; made a cheerful blaze; called out at the top of the stairs for tea and candles; came back again; cleared the table; set the egg-glass, and boiled two eggs. The kettle and tea-things having by this time made

their appearance, together with the little black teapot, he made tea, brought a tiny table to the sofa, and set a round of buttered toast, two eggs, and a cup of tea upon it.

"There," he exclaimed, delighted to see that his presence and his bustling had already wrought a wonderful improvement, "who cares for Hewly? *I* don't. Let him come in here if he likes, and I'll tell him so to his face."

"What made you think of Hewly?" asked Mr. Dreux.

"I am too hungry to tell you just now," was the reply.

"Because we have come to a final rupture," remarked Mr. Dreux, with the composure of complete weariness. "I am no longer his curate. He has aspersed my character, and he refuses to retract. And, moreover, he has taken upon himself to advance the remaining 200*l.* during my absence, and he demands immediate payment. I thought things had reached a climax when I came in just now, but your cheerfulness and this bright fire which you have made, and this rest make me feel quite different again. Well, you seem in very good spirits after your unsuccessful expedition."

"Unsuccessful!" repeated Wilfred. "Ah, well, never mind. I wish you would begin to eat. I must put some more water in the teapot and boil some eggs. Hewly"—

"Don't let us talk of him," interrupted Mr.

Dreux ; "I am afraid of speaking uncharitably. With regard to the success of your expedition,—of course I know that you would have told me at once if you had met with any."

"We certainly set off on the most wild-goose chase that ever was heard of," replied young Greyson, cracking his second egg. "But, never mind ; after tea I will tell you everything." As he spoke he produced from his pocket a small parcel, and, remarking that he always thought eggs were the better for a little cayenne-pepper, unfolded a pepper-box, the very counterpart of Mrs. Brown's mustard-pot, and set it down on the little table.

"Mr. Dreux took it up, and gazed at Greyson in considerable bewilderment. "Do you mean to say you have really and actually recovered the plate?" he asked, turning round the little article with intense interest.

"Not exactly. Didn't I go on purpose to recover the plate? Why, then, should you be so much astonished at my bringing some of it?"

"I never had the slightest idea that you would bring any of it back ; I never entertained so wild an expectation for an instant. That you might return without getting yourself into any serious scrape was the utmost I hoped for."

Greyson laughed triumphantly, and declared that after tea he would explain all. Mr. Dreux sat quietly in his nook on the sofa, noting his face ; he began to think he must have some good news to

communicate, especially as he would burst into a short involuntary laugh whenever he caught his eye, and became suddenly grave again, declaring that it was no laughing matter.

At last he gave out that he had finished, rang the bell, snuffed the candles, put on two large pieces of coal, swept up the hearth, and ensconced himself in an arm-chair, with the poker in his hand and his feet on the fender.

The landlady had cleared away tea, shut the door, and Mr. Dreux had looked at him for some time before he evinced any inclination to begin; his face had become serious, not to say sad, and he seemed lost in thought. When he did speak, it was not at all to the purpose; he seemed still far from the matter in hand.

"So Hewly has insulted you," he said. "Well, the worse for him."

"My dear Greyson, pray let us drop the subject of Hewly," urged Mr. Dreux. "You seem anything but aware how completely I am in his power."

"Completely in his power," repeated Greyson, in a musing tone, and then sunk into another silence, which Mr. Dreux broke by inquiring whether he meant to tell him anything at all that night.

On hearing this, young Greyson roused himself, and, turning his ingenuous face towards him, said, "I only paused because I scarcely knew where to begin. I have a great deal to tell you, but I was

thinking, just then, how many changes there are in people's lives, and how sudden they are. When you came in this evening you were miserable,—I know you were; before the end of it you will be so glad."

"Go on," said his auditor, "I cannot understand you; but I fully believe what you say."

"Then, if I am to tell you, you will promise not to interrupt me with questions?—you will hear me to the end?"

"I will do my best," was the answer, while the listener changed his position and stretched all his faculties to discover what this might mean.

Wilfred settled himself in the chair, and launched at once into his narrative: "The only real clue I had when I left this was given me by your landlady, who described to me most accurately the trunk in which the lodger carried away his goods; it was covered with calf-skin, she said, with the hair on, and it did not look as if it had been made by a regular trunk-maker, for it was shaped like a coffin. She also described the lodger's person; that he was a small, spare, dark man, with black eyes; that he had lost the third finger of his right hand, and that he went away from hence by the Birmingham Railway.

"Frank and I set off accordingly for Birmingham, with a policeman from here. And we and the police at Birmingham searched in all the places where they bought old silver, to see if we could

identify anything. We inquired at the railway offices whether they had seen anything of such a trunk, but it was of no use,—of course they could remember nothing. At last we were told that a person of the description we wanted had gone off to London two days before. We followed, not that we distinctly hoped to find him, but there was a curious kind of pleasure in the excitement of the chase. To describe the dens we went into with the police and the characters we met with, would, I suppose, surprise even you. I should think there are no such places anywhere but in London. We spent nearly a week of fatigue; sometimes the police thought they had got a clue, and then they lost it again. At last we got a summons to return to Birmingham, for they thought they had discovered the traces of a gang of thieves, some of whom they suspected were coiners. They contrived to elude the police, but it was believed they were still in the town, and we were advised by the magistrates to put an advertisement in the papers, stating that some weeks ago a robbery had been committed at Westport, and describing the stolen goods, stating that it was supposed the thief was concealed in Birmingham. They told us this was sure to be seen by the thieves, and that they would not dare to remain in the town, but would most likely try to get out by night.

“Well, we had several weary nights, haunting the railway stations, but though two men were

taken up and proved to belong to this gang of coiners, neither of them at all resembled the lodger. After this we went about in all directions, wherever they told us there were people suspected of coining. We got into gipsy camps; we searched the prisons. We were both getting heartily weary of the affair. We knew we had no chance; the police had told us so; for no man in his senses would keep plate about him when it could so easily be melted down, and that, once done, no acuteness could identify it.

"Well, we decided to come home, and were within an hour of setting off. We had actually gone to York, where, we were told, a man had been taken up with plate in his possession. It all came to nothing. We had left the hotel and reached the railway-station, when a waiter came running after us with a letter,—it was from Marion. I had written to her the day before, and given her my address. She wrote to inclose a letter which had arrived for me at Swanstead, and to say that my Uncle Raeburn had got another, and desired that I would come to him immediately, for that it would be very little out of my way in going back to Birmingham."

"Back to Birmingham," said Mr. Dreux, "what was that for?"

"I could not tell till I had read the inclosed letter; it had been written at Swanstead, and stated

that the writer was lodging there ; that he had sent it to the parson to be directed to me ; that he came from a poor dying wretch in Birmingham, who could tell me what I wanted to know, provided I would promise secrecy ; that the writer would go with me to Birmingham, if I would go with such a person, or the parson might go instead. Of course Frank and I started off at once for Swanstead. It was a most bitter night. We had to do part of the journey by coach ; and the consequence was, we were not there till twelve the next day.

“ Marion met us at the cross-roads in the carriage. She told me my uncle had waited for me till ten, the last minute, and then, as I did not arrive, had gone on himself to Birmingham.

“ She knew I was in search of stolen property, and told me the informant had urged my uncle to go immediately, or he feared the man would not live till he reached him.

“ Unluckily, that morning he had disappeared from the village, taken fright probably. So my uncle was left to find out whereabouts in Birmingham this sick man might be, as well as he could.

“ Frank was so knocked up, and so ill with influenza, that as we were within five miles of his father's house, I advised his going home ; we put him into the carriage at once ; Marion came with me into the inn, and as the country was so blocked

up with snow, I told Frank not to attempt to send back the carriage that night, but to keep it at his father's.

"After I had had a hasty meal, it was time to start for the railway; but when we came to investigate matters, there was only one post-chaise to be had. Of course I did not like to leave Marion there alone, and I could not send her home without a chaise. So, after less than five minutes' deliberation, we agreed that she should come on with me to Birmingham."

"What, on that bitter day, and with no preparation!"

"Don't look so shocked. What could I do? She was excessively uneasy about my uncle, and did not like the idea of his going into such places as the man had described; she was well covered up with furs and velvets, and seemed quite relieved at being with me; but though we had only fourteen miles to go, the snow was so deep that we were three hours on the road.

"It was lucky indeed that she came, for at the station I discovered that Frank had got our purse with him, such a careless trick of us both! Marion had money, only one sovereign and a few shillings, with her. So I was obliged to take her in the second class; very cold the carriage was, and very dark for her; there was an oil lamp, by the bye, but it wouldn't burn; we had just enough money for the tickets. Marion made light of the

cold and everything else. I know she was delighted at the thought of getting to my uncle, just as if she could do any good, you know! or keep him out of mischief. She was quite warm and happy; so she said. It was sixty miles to Birmingham; and of all the cold I ever experienced, I recollect nothing to compare to that night; it soon silenced us; the speed of the engine was very much impeded by the snow, and I began to be afraid we should be very late. I was so tired with travelling, that I kept falling asleep, in spite of the cold. We were quite alone, and Marion asked me to sit upon the floor, with my carpet-bag for a hassock, and lay my head on her knee. I had her muff for a pillow, and was dreaming away at a great rate, when a tremendous jerk woke me; it was quite dark; we seemed tilted over. I was on my knees, Marion was holding my head between her hands, and wrapping her furs round it, never thinking of herself. I had not an instant to ask what the matter was, when, with an awful creaking crash, the carriage turned over on its side. Marion cried out, but kept my head still, and held me tight. Don't be alarmed, she was not hurt, not in the least. I perceived instantly that we had stopped. Marion was perfectly still. I heard distant cries and groans; the snow gave us a little light, and I contrived to get the upper window open and drag Marion through to the roof, from which we scrambled somehow down to the ground, and found that four carriages, with ours, and a coal

platform had broken away from the rest ; the train had run off the line, and stopped half the field from us. There were four houses in the field ; some of the inhabitants were already out, they seized us with frantic haste and hurried us indoors. It snowed so fast that we could not see the state of the train ; but in our carriages not one person was much hurt ; no bones were broken.

“ Though the thing was so alarming and strange, I could hardly help laughing at the behaviour of these people ; they crowded about Marion and the other females, and the women kissed and hugged them ; oh, it was so droll ! They were not exactly poor people, for they soon produced eatables and drinkables in abundance ; and there was such a frying of bacon, drawing of beer, and toasting of cheese ! they seemed to think we must all be famished.

“ A great motherly woman stood over Marion, turning up her sleeves to see if her arms were bruised ; she warmed her at the fire, and tried to bend her bonnet into something like shape. Marion behaved pretty well ; she cried a little, of course ; the woman wanted to make her eat, but she could not. She looked blue and almost frozen. In the meantime some men came in from the train ; most providentially, not one life was lost. A pen of sheep had been overturned, and most of them killed ; and a high bank stopped the engine before any further mischief was done.

" They said there was a farm about half a mile off, where we could get a gig ; we were only ten miles from Birmingham. I wished to stay the night, that Marion might rest and recover from her fright a little ; but she thought of my uncle,—she was sure he would expect me by this train, and hear of the accident by telegraph before we could arrive. I agreed to go on. I had not a shilling, but I said I should drive the gig back myself the next day. Not a word was said about payment ; the women wrapped Marion in a rough, thick shawl, and we set out. Women seldom think of themselves in these cases : Marion braved the east wind and the snow extremely well. It was a good thing they lent her that shawl, else I think she would have been nearly frozen. It seemed a very long ten miles, however we reached Birmingham at last. I drove straight to the station, and, as I expected, there stood Mr. Raeburn waiting for me ; for he had got news of the accident, and was anxiously hoping I might not be coming till the next train. I flourished the whip and called out to him ;—how relieved he seemed when he saw me ! but when he beheld Marion sitting beside me, I shall never forget his face—yours is nothing to it. How hard you are upon me, I couldn't help it."

" No, I am quite aware of that, my dear fellow."

" Then don't look so uneasy, I told you she was none the worse. Well, he took us to the hotel. It was midnight. He shook the snow from us, hugged

us both, and cried in the corner while we ate a most excellent supper, for I can tell you we both did that. After that Marion began to cry. Here I made a speech to prove that I had done the best I could, and she said it was all her doing, coming in that way, and she hoped he would not be angry. Well, then we all went to bed.

"I know I'm spoiling this story in the telling, anybody else would have made a capital thing of it! Well, the next day my uncle told me the history of his search for the supposed poor dying man, which was in fact the history of his defeat. He had had a toilsome day, and no likelihood of accomplishing anything. The only thing he had to guide him was, that this man was said to have been very much injured in a fire, and that he was lying in a lodging-house. He had been to numbers of lodging-houses, and had seen a great deal of misery. He had only asked for the sick inmates; at some they had none, at others he went in and saw the sick, but perceived at once that they did not answer the description he wanted. They saw that he was a clergyman, and took for granted he came to visit them as such; so he did not choose to leave them without reading and praying with them.

"After breakfast it snowed heavily, but we went out together, leaving Marion, who was only a little tired, lying on the sofa by the fire.

"We went to all kinds of places without the

least success, and came in after twelve o'clock, quite tired. Marion then told us that an hour ago a woman had called and begged to speak with the clergyman who was staying there, that the waiter had at first refused to come up with her request, but she was so urgent that at last he did, 'and as you were not within,' Marion said to my uncle, 'I went down to speak to her. She told me she came from a woman whom the parson had visited the day before, that she wanted to see him again to pray with her, and hoped he would come for the love of God. The woman said the poor creature could not live through the night, and had begged so earnestly to see the parson again, that she had agreed to bring this message. I told her that when you returned you should hear of it, and that I had no doubt you would come and see her. She then went away, thanking me most gratefully.'

"Marion gave us the address, and my uncle set off directly, for he said he could at least visit the sick, though his first object in coming was thwarted. I thought I should like to go with him. The lodging-house was not far off,—we easily found it, and there was a person outside evidently waiting for us. She begged my uncle would go directly to the dying woman, for she quite raved after him. He would not let me go up stairs with him, and while I sat below, doing nothing, I asked the woman if she had any other sick lodgers.

"She looked rather queerly at me, but after a

cautious pause, during which she seemed to be scrutinizing my appearance, she said, 'Yes, she had, but he was a poor wretched object, not fit for a gentleman like me to see.' But I got up at once, and said I should like to see him, if she had no objection.

"So she took me out of doors into a broken-down open shop, and up a ladder, into the most wretched, dirty loft I ever beheld, with a hole in the roof, through which the snow was drifting on to the floor, and there, his face disfigured with patches of linen, lay, covered with rags, and feeble and stretched upon straw, not the man I had come to seek, but the schoolmaster, Thomas Dickson!"

He paused here, and remained silent several moments. His auditor was too much surprised to say anything. He went on, fixing his eyes on the fire, and speaking in a deeply thoughtful tone.

"I have been too happy in the world. I have not sufficiently considered the misery there is in it; and when I have thought of crime it has been too distinct from its fearful punishment even in this world. One side of his face was dreadfully burnt, his limbs were maimed, he seemed wasted to a shadow, and had nothing but a can of water standing by his straw.

"The woman left me with him, and as he could not turn, it was only when I came close that he recognised me.

"He did not seem startled or ashamed,—he was

past that; he only said, in a hollow voice, 'You have been a long time coming, Sir; I was afraid you would be too late.'

"I asked him if it was he who had sent for me. He said it was,—that he wished to make what reparation he could before he died.

"And then he told me a long story of all his guilt and misery. I cannot tell you the whole of it to-night, but it seemed to make me older as I listened, and I shall never forget the wretchedness it unfolded to my dying day.

"What he told me was in substance this: that *he did* steal that money, intending to carry it off, and go abroad—that he had an accomplice, a man more wicked than himself—that this man was the lodger—that after he had committed the robbery this man harboured him here, in this house, for the night—that he went early in the morning to a lonely place with him, for as he had threatened to betray him, there was nothing for him but to divide the spoil with him.

"In the grey morning twilight they went down into that open gravel pit on the London road to effect the division, and there the lodger proved the falsehood of that proverb that there is 'honour among thieves,' for he knocked Thomas Dickson down, and while he lay stunned and bleeding, he robbed him of the whole of the money, took his coat and watch from him, and when he recovered his senses, was nowhere to be seen.

"He was now miserable and destitute—all the fruits of his wickedness had been taken from him—he could not return to his situation. His character being gone, he told me he did not care what became of him, but went to Birmingham, where he got connected with a gang of coiners, and soon sunk into the deepest destitution and misery. At last, one day he met his former companion in the streets, and instantly threatened to give him up to the police if he tried to get away from him.

"The lodger, finding himself powerless, suffered himself to be followed to a stable, where he slept. He then declared that the notes he had stolen were worse than valueless to him, for their numbers were posted up at all the banks, so that he dare not attempt to change them, but that if Dickson would help him to dispose of a quantity of old silver which he had on his hands, they would make up their quarrel, and do the best they could for each other.

"Dickson told me that that night they set to work to knock the diamonds and pearls out of the old boxes and quaint old models of monuments. They collected them in a little leather bag, and then broke up some of the silver and melted it down. His heart smote him, for he saw whose they were, but he dared not remonstrate. They worked hard, and in two nights they had melted nearly all the plate, or crushed and defaced it.

"The next day, he says, the lodger met me and

Frank in the street, recognised us, and found means to ascertain our errand. He came back, and that night they together buried the notes, the jewels, and the remainder of the silver,—for some they had contrived to sell. They came home in the middle of the night, and laid down in the straw of their stable. They had struck a light, and he supposes a spark fell and smouldered among the boards, for shortly they were roused by a great light. They had made the door so secure that they could not undo it in a hurry. The lodger climbed out at one window, but before Dickson could rush to the other, a heap of straw took fire, and he was bathed in the flames. To use his own fearful expression, he crawled out of that stable blind and ‘half roasted.’

“He told me that the lodger was unhurt, and that he conveyed him to that wretched house where I found him—that two days after he was taken up for breaking into some outhouse. The sessions were just at hand, and he was tried and sentenced to seven years’ transportation.

“But when this poor, miserable Dickson found that he never could recover from his injuries, he wished to restore as much as he could of the stolen property, that, as he told me, he might not die with that sin on his conscience.

“When I looked at the poor dying creature, lying on that wretched bed, the snow drifting in about him, and nothing but some cold water to wet his

parched lips, and when I reflected on all he had lost, and what he had got in return, I thought how true it was that 'the wages of sin are hard.'

When Wilfred added that he had expressed a hope that his late patron would forgive him, and had said that without that he could not die in peace, Mr. Dreux started up, and declared that he would go himself to Birmingham, rather than Dickson should not be satisfied.

Wilfred did not wish that evening to damp his spirits by telling him that a few hours after that confession the poor man had died. "Sit down," he said, "I have not done yet. He told me, as well as his weakness would permit, the place where they had buried their spoil; it was in a barren field close to the railway; there, he said, we should see two poplar-trees, and we must walk, coming from the town, until the one trunk was hidden behind the other; that fifty paces from the nearest tree we should find the box in which they had buried the silver, and a tin case containing the notes, not one of which they had been able to change, so, as he had drawn only 25*l.* from the bank in gold, there was only that sum deficient. That very evening Mr. Raeburn and I, with a policeman, went to the spot, and two feet below the surface we found the box, and the tin case within it. The whole thing seemed so unlikely, so unreal, that I felt as if it must needs be a dream, I had so completely given up all idea that the original 400*l.* would ever be recovered;

however, here it is, as good as ever, and I wish you joy."

It would be impossible to describe the gratitude with which the pile of notes was received. Here was a most unexpected relief from the pressure of real pecuniary difficulty. Mr. Dreux, a few months before, could scarcely have credited that any amount of worldly possessions would have caused him such heartfelt joy and ease of mind. Now he looked upon the recovered money with a joy beyond what even his pupil could have hoped. He counted out 175*l.*, and handed over the rest to young Greyson.


"This two hundred is yours," he said.

"Mine," repeated young Greyson, "what do you mean?"

Mr. Dreux replied by thanking him, in the most grateful and affectionate terms, for what he had done, told him how relieved he felt on the very next morning to be able to pay Hewly what he had advanced; and then, reminding him that the plate was ruined, and most of the jewels gone, entreated that he would not pain him by refusing to take the money back again.

"I never tried to lay *you* under the slightest obligation," replied his pupil; "then why should you try to do it to *ME*?"

"Never laid me under the slightest obligation!" exclaimed Mr. Dreux. "You astonish me beyond measure! I am more indebted to you than to any person living. What can you mean, Greyson?"



"Oh, I meant pecuniary obligation; if you like to feel obliged to me for finding out where this money was, I do not mind. On the whole, though, I must say I rather enjoyed most of my adventures."

"Well, I see it is of no use talking to you; your notions of what constitutes obligation are, above all things in the world, extraordinary."

Greyson laughed, and said, "I was perfectly aware that you would try to cheat me into taking that money, so I propose that we lay the whole matter before an umpire, to be approved by both parties, and that we promise to abide by his decision."

Mr. Dreux agreed, and Greyson then began to question him about Hewly's conduct, especially as regarded his hints to the almshouse pensioners. If his host had not been unusually pleased, and tired withal, he might have observed a peculiar bearing in these questions, which revealed something more than common curiosity. As it was, he stretched his long limbs on the sofa, told everything his pupil chose to ask, and, too much occupied with his returning good fortune to see anything strange in the request, acceded at once, when Greyson asked if he might go with him the next day when he paid over the 200*l.* to Hewly.

"Certainly you shall, always provided that you will promise not to be rude to Hewly."

"Rude!" repeated Wilfred, as if quite shocked, "I should not think of being so mean."

"You were *not* rude, then, the other night, when he called here,—Eh?"

"Oh, well, I was rather, but I never mean to be again. What an ass he was to be rude to you to-day!"

"I suppose the diamond ring is gone?"

"That is the best part of the story. They had pawned it for a mere trifle,—not a sovereign; only imagine their ignorance. We may yet recover it; but when we went to the pawn-shop, of course it was not to be found."

"Have you got the silver?"

"No, it was all nothing but a mass of ore, excepting that pepper-box and a little model, not so big as a snuff-box, of your dear ancestor, Sir Gualtier de Dreux,—his tomb I mean,—and when Marion saw it, she said she should like to have it."

"What did your sister want with it?"

"Oh, I don't know; do you?"

"How can you be so absurd? Of course not."

"I now remember Marion gave me some elaborate reasons why she wished to have it; the original is in Swanstead church. I think she wanted it, she said, because the real old fellow was opposite our pew. I remember she was afraid to sit opposite him when we were children, he looked so stern and so grim. She also said it was an interesting little work of art, and several other reasons she gave; I forgot them. However, I gave the thing to her.

It's very odd how family likeness descends; he is something like you, I declare."

"Nonsense; am I, then, so stern and grim that a child would be afraid of me?"

"I can't tell how you would look in chain armour. I asked Marion if she did not see the likeness."

"I wish, I do wish you would not talk in this strain," thought his auditor. "I am sure if you knew, you would be the last person to do it."

"So you have nothing left but the pepper-box, Greyson?"

"Yes, I've got old Gualtier, after all. Marion altered her mind, and wouldn't have him. He's the image of you,—she may say what she likes to the contrary. Here he is."

"Your pockets are capacious. How bright he looks!" remarked his descendant.

"Yes; we cleaned him up with plate-powder."

"*We?*"

"Yes, Marion and I; we had nothing to do in the evening. I think it's a beautiful thing,—a great pity little M. wouldn't have it. I always thought that hound, crouching with its head on his breast, and looking so earnestly in his master's face, had something peculiarly touching about it. How well I remember our asking Mr. Raeburn, when we were very little children, to lift us up to stroke that dog, and feel how cold the knight's forehead was!"

"Well, Greyson, shall we have supper?"

The pupil willingly consented. The tutor, at his request, ordered oysters and bread and butter for that repast, that, as he said, they might finish the evening in a convivial style befitting the occasion.

"Now, about this umpire?" asked Mr. Dreux. "I have been thinking, Greyson, that, if I may draw up the statement, you shall choose to whom it shall be submitted."

"Agreed. And I name Mr. Raeburn. Let us call ourselves Smith and Jones,—I am Smith."

"Very well. Then the statement begins:—'I, Jones, sold goods to Smith, for which I received 200*l*.'"

"No; it begins before that. It begins:—'The sum of 400*l*. was stolen from Jones; in consequence of which he sold goods to Smith for which he received 200*l*.'"

"Well, be it so, if you please. I will draw it up to-night, and to-morrow, at ten, let us go to Hewly and pay down the money. I shall be very happy, my dear fellow, to have it off my mind."

"I do not care how soon we go," returned Wilfred. "So Hewly refuses to apologize, does he? Ah! well, we shall see."

Mr. Dreux smiled, and said, "You are very much mistaken if you think the mere proof of his being wrong as to my ability to return the money, will make him do so."

"I think no such thing," replied the pupil. "Good night; I will be here by ten."

Punctual to the moment young Greyson arrived the next morning, and found Mr. Dreux wonderfully improved by ease of mind and rest. He had got a letter from Elinor's maid, reporting good progress; and showed Wilfred the statement he had drawn up for the umpire, which the latter thought very fair.

They arrived at Mr. Hewly's house, and were shown into his study. He did not keep them waiting many minutes, and gave Wilfred a peculiarly sinister look when he saw him, for he thought he was come to try to accommodate matters.

He was obviously surprised when Mr. Dreux handed over the notes, and the more so as he observed that the numbers were the same as those of the stolen ones.

"My friend, Greyson, wishes to give you a short account of how he became possessed of these notes," Mr. Dreux said, turning to Wilfred, who now looked excited and ill at ease.

"As you please," returned Mr. Hewly, with his most unpleasant expression. "Then perhaps he will make haste and begin, for my time is precious."

"However precious it may be," replied Wilfred, "it will be as well to spare enough to hear what I have to say. You have heard nothing so important, Mr. Hewly, for a long time."

Dreux and Hewly both looked at him with unfeigned surprise; the latter, with a supercilious smile, requested him to proceed.

"I am ready," said Wilfred. Yet he paused and hesitated, with an embarrassment which was not usual with him, and which fixed the attention of both gentlemen, who involuntarily glanced at each other.

"I believe, Mr. Hewly," he at length said,—"I believe your parents are not in the rank of life which you—you occupy yourself"—

"My parents," interrupted Hewly, "what do you bring up that for, Sir? My father was as worthy a man as yours could have been, Sir."

"I have no doubt of it, Sir," proceeded Wilfred, in a tone of apology; "and, in most families, some members rise and others sink."

"Well, Sir, to the point," said Hewly, testily; "I have heard enough of my parentage."

Wilfred then began to give an account of how he had discovered the poor, miserable schoolmaster, and repeated his statements as to how he, in his turn, had been robbed by another man, who afterwards, to complete his crimes, stole a quantity of valuable plate from the house where he lodged.

"Indeed!" replied Mr. Hewly, indifferently, not to say insolently.

"That man, Sir, lodged in the same house with Mr. Dreux," remarked Wilfred. "It was then that he stole the plate."

Mr. Dreux, at this point of Greyson's narrative, observed that Hewly turned very pale.

"He afterwards met with Thomas Dickson, the man whom he had robbed of his ill-gotten gain, and the two together melted down a great part of this plate, but the notes they dared not change. This man, of whom I spoke, became connected with a gang of coiners, and was suspected, while with them, of having committed murder; but they pursued their own wretched system of morals, and did not give him up to justice. In a few weeks he was taken by the police in the act of forcing open a door; he was brought to trial, convicted, and I saw him in jail. He sails for Australia this very day."

Mr. Hewly's face had become deadly pale, and the cold perspiration stood upon his forehead. The sinister expression was then in greater force than ever, but with it enough of terror to excite the pity of both his companions; and Greyson went on more gravely than before.

"I saw the man in jail; he was hardened and profane. He is a small, dark man, and he has lost the third finger of his right hand."

"Merciful heaven!" said Hewly, faintly, and shrinking back in his chair.

"Do you wish to hear his name?" proceeded Greyson. "The schoolmaster told me his real name; it was known in this part of the country to him only. He died in whispering it to me;

and he told me that the wretched convict came of respectable and honest parents, but that he had always shown himself a reprobate. Hitherto I have divulged the name to no one. I returned to this place intending to keep it a secret for ever, but I have altered my mind, and must tell it now in the presence of Mr. Dreux. This wretched man, who had been lingering about Westport, tormenting you for money to bribe him away,—this double thief, whom suspected murder has not brought to the gallows, because his house-breaking was discovered first,—this coiner, and now convict, whose crime has enabled you to—to—yes, I must and will say it—to oppress a better man than yourself, cannot now be *named* even without reflecting some of his disgrace upon yourself, for he is your brother—Michael Hewly.”

With a cry, between terror and pain, Mr. Hewly covered his face with his hands. He had always shown a nervous sensibility about his low origin, and a great dislike to having it known; and now the disgrace of his brother, no less than some struggling remains of natural affection, battled for the mastery, and made him truly a spectacle for pity.

Mr. Dreux’s consternation at this *denouement* was too great to admit of his saying anything.

Greyson paused till Hewly removed his white, trembling hands from his face, and looked forlornly at him. Then he proceeded: “I hope you believe, Mr. Hewly, that I did not give you this pain with

any mean wish to revenge Mr. Dreux upon you, or merely to let him see that all these difficulties have been brought upon him by a member of *your* family, but I acknowledge that I have an end in view."

"Greyson," interrupted Mr. Dreux, "I had rather—I wish you not to bring me into this affair."

Greyson looked at him, but went on addressing Hewly:—

"You will please to observe that this man was tried under a feigned name, and there is every reason to think no living persons know his real one but myself and Mr. Dreux. I do not know what use he may choose to make of his knowledge,—knowledge which I was determined he should possess, not that he was likely to revenge himself, but that he might have full opportunity to do so if he chose,—as for me, my silence is only to be bought in exchange for something which I have already fixed in my own mind."

What Hewly might have done, or to what depths of submission he might have condescended in the confusion of his thoughts, it is impossible to say, if he had not been arrested by the voice of his late curate, who said, deliberately: "Mr. Hewly, I give you my unconditional promise that, God helping me, I will never divulge what I have just heard to any living person."

He received a look in reply which expressed both shame and gratitude. Then the unhappy man

turned anxiously to Wilfred; he was a mere boy to them, but they both looked at him with something like entreaty, for Hewly felt as if everything worth living for was at stake, and Dreux felt keenly that but for his sake this punishment would never have been inflicted; he could not but think there was something of unsparing hardness in the way in which the thing had been done, and yet he knew that he ought not to interfere, for nothing could be so galling to Hewly as that Wilfred should promise silence at *his* request, which was what he believed matters were tending to.

Greyson preserved a dogged silence for some minutes, in spite of the restless agitation of Hewly. At length he said,—“Mr. Hewly” (and he threw an accent almost of respect into his voice)—“Mr. Hewly, in looking back upon our past intercourse, I find that throughout I have not treated you as I could wish. I regret it the more, because I can now make no difference on this account in the conditions on which I will promise silence—utter, complete silence. I shall only insist upon *one* thing,—one which seems to me an absolute duty; and I most solemnly promise silence on that condition, and on that only.”

“Name your condition, then, at once,” said Hewly; “there is nothing I will not do—no, nothing.”

“My condition is, that you shall make a written apology to Mr. Dreux for the expressions you have

used concerning him, which apology shall be dictated by me, and shown to the people in the almshouses."

The start of horror and indignation with which this proposal was received did not seem in the least to disconcert Wilfred.

"Greyson," exclaimed Mr. Dreux, much agitated, "I do not desire it. I beg as a favour to myself that you will dispense with it. If Hewly will apologize to me in private I shall be quite content."

"If the people have not *believed* Mr. Hewly's insinuations respecting you," remarked Wilfred, "his admitting them to be false will not lower their opinion of *him*; but if they have believed them, then it is necessary that you should be righted."

"But leave the thing to me, Greyson. Will you leave it in my hands? Consider,—a written apology,—what man could" —

Hewly hoped. But he saw the pupil turn to the master, and give him a look of such calm, steady denial, that the latter was fain to bite his lips and look out of the window to hide his surprise and annoyance. He then looked at Hewly, and said, "Well, Sir, you have heard me."

"And I should be glad to know what I have done to make an apology necessary," replied Hewly, with his most unpleasant expression.

"I do not refer to what you have actually asserted," replied Greyson; "but I went to the

almshouses this morning, and I found a very bad opinion prevailed there concerning Mr. Dreux,—one quite derogatory to him as a clergyman and a gentleman. I was referred to *you* to know whether he did not deserve it. A slight hint, a gesture even, an insidious doubt, or an ill-timed application of some common-place proverb, may be at the root of all the preposterous tales now current respecting him, but I know the mischief is done, and that you have been the doer."

"I will write an apology," said Hewly, looking daggers at his late curate, who rose and walked to the window. "I must, I suppose, as I am entirely at your mercy. But the injustice of the thing must be glaringly apparent even to you, when the very man who is to receive it admits that it is not required."

"No other man would," replied Greyson. "The apology must be written, or I take my leave."

"You are in a needless hurry," said Hewly, hastily; "I have said once that I would write an apology."

"You remember that it is to be at my dictation," said Greyson.

Mr. Hewly actually writhed in his chair. But what was the alternative? He took up a pen, and, with strong sensations of shame and disgust, wrote down as follows:—

"I, Brigson Hewly, Vicar of this parish, hereby

declare that I believe the Rev. Arthur Cecil Dreux to be in all respects an upright and honourable man; I also declare that I never had any reason to think otherwise; and I hereby apologize to the said Rev. A. C. Dreux for having given cause to others to suppose that I did.

(Signed) "BRIGSON HEWLY."

"There," said Hewly, now giving way to his temper, and tossing the paper over to Greyson, "I have paid dearer for your paltry promise than it was worth. Now I shall be glad to have it."

"Certainly," replied Greyson. "I do hereby solemnly"—

"You will please to swear," said Hewly, drawing a Testament towards him.

Greyson complied.

"And now, gentlemen," said Hewly, rising, and quivering with passion, "there is the door;—the sooner you go the better. Go, and make the most of your mean-spirited revenge."

The sneer with which he accompanied these words was quite electrifying.

Greyson folded up the piece of paper, and left the house with Mr. Dreux. He did not wish for a *tête-à-tête* conversation with him, and was thinking how best to break the silence, and take his leave, when Dreux stopped him just as they reached the garden-door of his late house, and holding out his hand, by way of thanks, said,—

"But after all, Greyson, if you had failed to get that apology."——

"I would still have held my tongue. Was that what you were going to ask? Of course I would."

"And what are you going to do with the paper?"

"It is mine."

"Yes, I know that. But be merciful, Greyson."

"Because I see that you really wish it, I will. I will take the trouble of carrying it round myself to the almshouse people, and they shall see it, but I will not make even so much as one copy for distribution. Surely that is kindness to him, and less than that would not be justice to you. Why do you smile?—I know what you are thinking."

"Indeed, you do not."

"Yes, you were thinking how odd it was that a youth like me should have such important matters to arrange."

"You are telling me your own thoughts, not mine, for you are a friend and counsellor to me. I have nearly lost sight of the fact that you are a mere boy and my pupil. By the bye, how did Mrs. Brown get my mustard-pot?"

"Bought it of a pedlar, to whom the thief must have sold it that same day."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE VESTRY AND THE CLIFF.

AND now the gossips of Westport were destined to have their hearts cheered with a little news. Various versions of the apology got about the town; then it was rumoured that Mr. Dreux was going to leave, and had given up his curacy, though not his lectureship; also it was a known fact that Mr. Hewly was gone out for a month; finally, it was observed that old Ferguson looked very glum, and that his daughter seemed very much out of spirits.

Mr. Dreux soon began to feel the good effects of the apology. All his friends called on him, and all expressed their sorrow at his leaving a place "where he was so much respected." He was very well pleased to hear them say so, but was too busy to go out much into society. However, he found time to write to Greyson, to beg him to come and dine with him at his lodgings; and as the note contained a pen and ink illustration, representing a young gentleman playing on a flute, he understood

thereby that he was to bring that instrument with him, which he accordingly did, and found his host in excellent spirits, and looking quite well.

"In the first place, how is Miss Dreux?" asked Greyson.

"I have a letter to say she is steadily improving, and is to go to the Isle of Wight in a week."

"And I have got a letter from the umpire, which I will read after dinner."

Nothing could be said till the servant had cleared away the dinner equipage and withdrawn. Greyson then produced Mr. Raeburn's letter, and read it aloud:—

"DEAR WILFRED,—

"I have received your letter, containing the complicated statement of the transactions between Smith and Jones. I fully understand that you do not wish to consider what the *law* would decide on this matter (as on that head there can be no doubt), but you merely wish for the opinion of a third party as to what is equitable, so that neither may feel himself laid under an obligation, or that he has taken an unfair advantage of the other.

"I shall state the case, in order that my opinion may be plainer.

"It appears, that in consequence of the loss of the original 400*l.*, Jones sold Smith 200*l.* worth of silver plate, and this silver, after the money was paid over for it and the receipt given, was stolen.

"But it appears that Smith, setting out in search of his silver, finds the original 400*l.*, which he returns to Jones, who then considers that Smith has a right to be indemnified for the loss of his silver, and wishes to share the 400*l.* with him. Smith, on the other hand, declines.

"Now it is certain, that in returning the 400*l.*, Smith only did his duty; but Jones, in requiring him to accept 200*l.*, desires to do *him* a favour, because he is of opinion that it was hard upon him that he should have enjoyed the property he had purchased for so short a time; for if it had not been stolen for a couple of years after Smith bought it, Jones would never have thought of repaying him.

"My opinion is this,—that the 200*l.* should not be accepted by Smith, he having no right to it; but that, as he spent a large sum of money in searching for his silver, which search led to the discovery of the 400*l.*, he shall receive from Jones the whole of his travelling expenses, and, if his time was of value, Jones may indemnify him for that loss also.

"This, my dear boy, is the best conclusion I can come to. You will observe, that Smith has no *right* to his travelling expenses, but he, having done Jones a benefit, may fairly accept one in return.

"Your sister sends her love to you.

"Your affectionate uncle," &c.

"There," said Greyson, when he had finished it, "I think, on the whole, that it is a very fair decision."

"I have promised to abide by it, and I will," was the reply; "but it gives me greatly the advantage."

"Here is the packet of notes," said Greyson, producing a parcel from his pocket, "and you are to pay my travelling expenses. Do you see that my uncle has put notes of admiration after the remark about Smith's time, and its possible value? Of course he knows quite well who Smith and Jones are."

And now that this affair was settled, the other arrangements were easily made. The late Curate of Pelham's Church, *alias* St. Plum's, found himself out of debt and free from his engagement with Hewly, while the possession of the rest of the recovered sum made it needless for him to accept any curacy without deliberation.

"Have you heard that Mr. Hewly is in treaty with a clergyman in Kent to exchange livings with him?" asked Greyson. "I believe he thinks St. Plum's will hardly do for him after that apology."

Mr. Dreux could not but acquiesce in the propriety of the step, and Greyson went on,—

"I really am sorry for Hewly; for my aunt Ferguson says Helen was so astonished, so horrified, when she heard of it, that it seems impossible she can ever get over it and like him again; and yet,

you know, Mr. Dreux, I took all imaginable pains not to put a word in which was not absolutely necessary to make it an apology at all. I did not say 'humble apology,' or anything of the kind, for, in fact, I was afraid he might turn restive, and I should not get it at all; and if he had refused, and trusted to my generosity, I could not but have held my tongue."

The rest of the evening was spent in giving and receiving the lesson, and for several days after this Mr. Dreux was unceasingly occupied in going about taking leave of his old parishioners. He had made up his mind to spend two or three months in travelling for one of the great Evangelical Societies. The tour marked out for him would occupy three months, and as public speaking was no trouble to him, he believed he should find this engagement a positive relaxation, and find a relief from his regret at leaving his people, in the change and bustle of travelling.

Accordingly he preached his farewell sermon, took leave of his old pensioners, and set off one chilly morning at the end of March. It was six o'clock in the grey of the morning, and as he had kept the time of his departure a secret, there was no one at the railway office to see him off but young Greyson, from whom he was very sorry to part for more reasons than one.

The same day that he thus quietly withdrew from the scene of his labours and usefulness Mr. Hewly

returned, but he did not appear in public; he had effected the exchange of his living, and he now advertised his furniture, paid his bills, and left the town to return no more.

In the meantime his late curate recovered all his wonted health, strength, and energy in the variety afforded by travelling and the pleasurable excitement of public speaking.

So passed the whole of April. It was an early spring, and the country grew more beautiful day by day. He travelled west and south, through South Wales, Dorsetshire, and Devonshire, till, on the 1st of May, he reached a small town in the wildest part of Cornwall, standing close to the sea cliffs. The trees were in full leaf and the day was almost sultry. He walked through the gaunt old-fashioned street to the vicar's house, and to his disappointment heard that the vicar was ill, but that the officiating clergyman could no doubt assist him, though he could not be spoken with at present, for the bells were already ringing for the Wednesday evening service. "But if Mr. Dreux would go down to the church," the vicar's wife said, "he would no doubt see him after the service, and hear what arrangements he had made for the meeting."

It was a glorious evening, hot as midsummer, but the east was already beginning to turn ruddy. There was a high steep hill rising directly behind the church. It looked wild and bushy, and it flung back the sound of the bells with such a strong echo

as seemed to fill to overflowing the narrow valley in which the town stood.

The streets were very quiet, and the old-fashioned casements were full of flowering plants. He easily followed the sound of the bells, and found the church,—a fine old building, with a tapering spire, and windows glowing with the sunset red, but the ringing of bells was over, and the service had already begun.

As the sound of the reader's voice fell upon his ears, he stood for an instant doubting the evidence of his senses. He went up the side aisle and was shown into a pew, then turned to make conviction still more certain. The reader stood with his face full towards him—it was Allerton!

Yes, assuredly it was Allerton. As he read, the familiar tones of his voice struck with mingled pain and pleasure upon the senses of his sometime friend. The heart is very quick at divining the hidden history of those whom it loves. As he listened he perceived some unwonted cadences. There was a change, and who could tell what sorrow and pain had caused it, or whether it might not be referable to the disappointment he had suffered when they parted?

As he went on listening, the change became more perceptible. There was an earnestness of gravity and feeling not usual before. It was extremely touching to him to fancy, as he could not help doing, that this man who had taken such pains to hide from him had yet found no new friends to heal

the pain of his rejected affection. He little thought who was listening, and he took no pains to conceal the altered expression of his face. He went through the prayers with grave simplicity, and ascended the pulpit. He was now still more distinctly seen, for the church had been lighted; but his late friend was sheltered in the deep shadow of a pillar, and was in no danger of being recognised.

He gave out his text,—“For old things have passed away, all things are become new.”

A singular text for *him* to have chosen, his auditor thought; but as he went on and opened out his subject, a strange bewildering feeling came over and nearly overwhelmed him. It seemed as if this scene and all other things, nay, even existence itself, might be a dream and a mistake,—for with far more power and more emotion than he had been wont to exhibit before, he brought forward his opinions and unfolded the scheme of salvation according to the principles which he had once despised.

The sermon went on; the first impression had been correct; there was nothing which left room for a moment's doubt. Allerton was preaching to a small audience and from notes; he hesitated now and then, perhaps less from want of words than from the newness of the matters which he was bringing forward,—new to him,—but said without compromise, and evidently from heartfelt experience.

The hidden listener sat still in the shadow, and

thanked God ; but an irrepressible pang of regret shot through his heart as he wondered what could be the feeling which made him still hold himself aloof when, as it seemed, they should be far more to each other than ever they had been before, and when he ought no longer to resent what his sometime friend had done.

This excitement was almost too much to be borne, but still the thrilling voice went on, and now he wondered how they were to meet, and what must be done. It was evident that Allerton had been there some time, and that he was not setting forth anything different to his ordinary teaching. With what motive, then, or with what feelings did he still conceal himself from his best friend ? But this question could not be answered, and the sermon was over before he had come to any determination as to how he should present himself.

He went out of the church with the rest of the congregation, and passed down the dusky street. It was strangely painful to him that Allerton should have made no effort to regain his friendship. He had got nearly as far as the inn where he intended to sleep when the desire to see and speak with him came back so strongly, that he turned at once and retraced his steps to the church, hoping to find it not yet closed, and to gain some information as to his residence.

He ran up the stone steps. The pew-opener, a

woman, had just put out the lights, and the church looked dark and large as he glanced down the ranges of pillars.

"Did you wish to see the monuments, Sir?" said the woman.

He explained his object, and she told him Mr. Allerton would soon return, for he was only gone to see a sick woman, and had ordered the light to be left burning for him in the vestry. She further volunteered the information that he often made a study of the vestry, for that their vicar (who was ill, poor gentleman, and had been all the winter) kept his books there. She took him into the vestry, talking all the time.

"Mr. Allerton was gone out at that door," she said, "and would not be long." In fact, the vestry door leading out into the wild rising ground before mentioned stood wide open. There was a square of carpet on the vestry floor, an old-fashioned sofa, and some high-backed chairs, together with a closet door standing ajar, where might be seen clerical vestments hanging against the wall.

"If you wish to see Mr. Allerton, Sir," said the woman, "perhaps you won't mind waiting here? He is sure to return."

"Not at all. I need not detain you. I will wait alone."

"Yes, Sir. Only, you see, I must lock you in, Sir."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Sir; for Mr. Allerton has a key to let himself in by.

"Well, if you are quite sure Mr. Allerton will return"—

"Oh, no fear, Sir. Mr. Allerton can't get home without going through the church;" and so saying, the pew-opener set him a chair, made him a curtsy, and withdrew along the dark aisle, locking the doors behind her.

He waited so long that he really began to fear there must be some mistake, and that Allerton would not return at all that night. With this fancy strong upon him, and not relishing the ridiculous position he should be in if left there all night, he went hastily down the aisle to try the strength of the great lock. Of course he could no more stir it than he could fly; but he had scarcely tried when he heard the vestry door hastily opened and rapid steps crossing the floor. There was all the length of the church between them, and before he had taken many paces toward him Allerton had flung open the closet door, taken out a decanter of wine, and left the place as quickly as he came in, leaving the door open behind him. He seemed in urgent haste, and never turned round, or he must have seen the figure entering the moment after he left the vestry. Dreux hesitated a moment, disappointed at being so thwarted, and then looked out at the open door to see which way he had gone.

Apparently he must have turned down by the side of the church, for no trace of him was discernible. By his haste, and by his going away with wine, his late friend believed he must be about to administer the sacrament to some person in extremity, and, resolving to wait for him, walked up and down before the door for nearly an hour.

A low wooden paling, with a gate in it, divided the church-yard from the rugged hill. The moon was shining, and when the clock had struck eleven he began to get so impatient of Allerton's protracted absence that he resolved to climb the hill and try to find his way out into the town. At first he got on very well, but presently he came to a gravelly ascent, partially covered with trees, and so steep that he could not climb it without the help of his hands among the bushes. Though the moon had gone in, and it had become perfectly dark, he was still thinking of forcing his way up the ascent, when he heard a door at some distance behind him creak heavily, and immediately made the best of his way towards the sound.

To his mortification, the vestry-door was closed. He shook the lock with right good-will, but could not stir it; but as the lamp was burning, he fancied the wind must have blown it to, and if so, Allerton might yet return.

Still, it was wearisome and dispiriting to walk there alone. He wandered about, but could find no outlet, and at length tried the rugged, thorn-dotted

hill again. He dashed about blindly for some time among the trees, but could not reach the boundary line, nor see any path, the little light scarcely serving to mark the different hues of grass and gravel. His progress was slow; sometimes he came to a rock, and had to go round it before he could ascend again. At last he came to a smooth open space, where the grass grew short. The ascent was as steep as ever, but he set off at a quick pace, for he did not at all like his position; he might be trespassing for anything he knew. On a sudden he heard steps behind him, as of a man rushing up after him. He quickened his pace, and the man called out to him to stop, and the next instant had seized him by the arm. The ascent was so steep that he had greatly the advantage of his assailant, who was so out of breath with running that he could not speak, but closed with him, and was evidently trying to throw him down. It was but the work of an instant to throw him off violently: the impetus sent him running down many degrees faster than he came up. Before an instant had passed he heard another man rushing up towards him. He did not relish the idea of there being two against him, and ran up the precipitous hill, trying to distance this new pursuer, and determining, if possible, not to close with him till they came to open ground. Violent as his exertions were, they availed him nothing, for the man running after him redoubled his own, and ran as if his life depended upon it. The moon was gone in; he did

not know the ground ; the man was close behind him, crashing down dead boughs, and displacing the heavy loose stones in his reckless race. He was close at his heels, and would have him instantly. He seemed trying to speak, and was panting violently, when Dreux, trying to repeat his last experiment, turned upon him, and seizing him suddenly, wrestled with him with all his strength.

He was a powerful man, but his assailant was a match for him, though both were so completely out of breath with running that to speak was impossible. Dreux struck the man several times, and struggled desperately. The man tried to pinion his arms ; he strove to speak and to stop him, and when he found he could not,—for Dreux continued to drag himself further up,—he next attempted to throw him down, and, not succeeding, flung himself on his knees, and by his weight brought his assailant down also. He recovered breath as they fell, to cry out, frantically, “ Stop, stop ; Oh, my God ! the cliff, the cliff ! ” He held tightly by Dreux, whose foot slipped, and the two, still struggling, rolled over the edge of a descent of about four feet, and so steep that, when the latter recovered from a short giddiness which had seized him, he was astonished to find himself unhurt. The man, as they fell over together, had uttered a cry of indescribable horror. The word “ precipice ” suggested itself to his bewildered brain ; he heard an injunction to be quiet, and, as he became more collected, he found himself supported, in a half-upright

position, on a very narrow ledge of rock. He rested on one elbow, but his feet were hanging over, and he could feel no footing. He found that the man, who seemed to be in a kneeling position somewhat above him, was grasping him round the chest, and that if this support was withdrawn, he must inevitably fall over.

It was intensely dark, but he was conscious of a rushing, booming sound far beneath him. The next instant the man said, in a hurried, faint whisper,—“I am no enemy; don’t move; don’t stir a muscle, if you value my life or your own.” Low as the voice was, it was too familiar to be mistaken. He heard it with a start, which placed his life in additional peril. The man was Allerton.

His first impulse was to make himself known; the next instant he remembered the imprudence of such a step.

“Now, listen to me,” Allerton proceeded, more calmly, for he had taken breath; “do you see that cleft of sky between the clouds?”

He answered, in a whisper, “Yes.”

“In less than ten minutes,” proceeded Allerton, “the moon will reach it, and we shall have an interval of light. Don’t attempt to move till then; I can easily hold you while you are still; till light comes we must rest.” He paused a moment, and then went on, “You are a stranger here, or you would not have climbed this hill in the dark. I tried to stop you,—could not speak for want of breath; keep

still, I charge you. If I know where we are, I only want light to get you up safely."

"But this cliff, this precipice,—the sea"—

"Yes, the sea rolls at its base. If you struggle to help yourself you are lost,—we are both lost; but if you can be still, perfectly passive, I trust in God that I can lift you by main strength on to my ridge, without overbalancing."

"And if you should fail?"

"If I should fail. Don't think of that now; don't look over,—don't for your life look over; there are still a few minutes left for prayer,—call upon God."

The moon drew near the edge of the cloud, and they had a full view of their fearful position. Beneath them was the sea, with the face of the precipice shelving almost sheer down to it. Allerton felt a shiver run through the frame of the supposed stranger, and charged him once more to be quiet. He was becoming faint and sick, but had strength of nerve to obey. The ledge on which he was lying was too narrow to admit of his turning; he was held on by the strength of Allerton's arms, who himself was kneeling on a broader space, two feet higher up.

Both their hats had fallen off in the struggle, and the troubled water was tossing them about below.

"Now," cried Allerton, "*dare*, if possible, to be passive. I hold you; try if you can find any footing at all; take time."

"No," was the reply, "I can find none."

"Can you draw one foot up on to the ledge?"

"Impossible."

"The instant I begin to raise you draw a long breath. Now!"

The moon was fully out. Allerton slightly changed his position, unclasped his hand, seized his companion by the wrist, and with a mighty effort raised him about a foot. Happily Dreux disobeyed his injunctions, and dared to help himself. He was no sooner half erect than he found footing, which lightened Allerton's task, and gave him time to breathe; this was a timely rest, and he gathered coolness and the confidence which was beginning to waver, then with one more effort he dragged him on to the upper ledge, where they rested in comparative safety.

It was easy to climb the small descent down which they had rolled. They had scarcely accomplished it when the moon went behind the cloud again, and they were left in total darkness.

"Now, we must wait a while," said Allerton, and he threw himself into the long grass, almost overpowered with his exertions.

The man whom he had saved came up and wrung his hand, but did not speak. Allerton supposed him to be some artist or tourist, for many such visited that romantic neighbourhood. The momentary glimpse he had had of his appearance had assured him that he occupied the station of a gentleman, and feeling a strong interest in him, he resolved to ask him home to his house for the night. The church

clock struck again, and just then the moon emerged from the cloud, and Allerton sprang up and exclaimed, "Come here, and let us look at the danger we have passed." He took him by the arm and brought him to the brink of the cliff, holding him while he suffered him to look over. Still the stranger said nothing, but looked down—down into the seething water, shuddered, and pressed his hand. Allerton, who was moved himself, spoke to him of the goodness of God in having preserved their lives; and reminded him of the fact, that in imminent danger there is no possible rest for the human mind but in calling upon God. Even in that doubtful light, Dreux wondered that he did not recognise him; but being touched by his goodness, and by the danger they had passed through, he remained silent, and shrunk from making himself known. Allerton then went on to speak of the happiness of those whose hearts are in a state of preparation for death, and added a few words on the way of salvation and acceptance with God. Allerton thought he listened attentively, but the moon just then coming out more fully, he was obliged to turn his thoughts in another direction. "Now, then," he exclaimed, with his natural quickness, "I am going to take you down by a still steeper way than you came up, but there are flights of steps. You must follow me, and that quickly, for I don't know the place very well, and want to get down while there is light."

They ran down quickly, and, this way being

much shorter, they were soon by the vestry-door; it was opened by a man to whom Allerton stopped to speak, while Dreux looked on. "This is the gentleman," he heard him say; "he is quite safe." The man muttered something about people not liking to be flung down by those they meant to serve. Allerton laughed; the man spoke in the country dialect, and Dreux did not then remember that more than one man had tried to stop him.

"Come to me to-morrow," continued Allerton, dismissing the man. "And, as for you, young gentleman, take my advice, and never climb a strange cliff in the dark again; and never forget this night. Look there." He pointed to a deep ravine, not far from the pathway.

"I see it," replied Dreux, now speaking for the first time aloud; "and I never shall forget. I am deeply grateful to God, and to you. Look here." He drew back a pace or two as he spoke and threw back his disordered hair from his forehead, then he turned so that the full broad moonlight shone upon his features.

Allerton, who was standing on the threshold, had heard his voice at first with a start of incredulous amazement, but the truth no sooner flashed upon him than he uttered an exclamation of horror and almost of affright.

"Allerton! Allerton!" exclaimed Dreux, advancing upon him as he receded into the vestry, "Is it really come to this?—have you thought so hardly

of me?—do you hate me so entirely, that, though you have perilled your life to save mine,—though you have prayed for me, when you thought me a stranger, you no sooner know me than you fling my gratitude back, and shrink from the very touch of my hand when I hold it to you?”

Allerton's face was white and rigid, but he drew still further back, and muttered, “You take a mistaken view of the case. You are wrong altogether.”

“I do not. I have seen you shrink from me; and you wish to force me from your presence without the common expression of my civility, though you know that I owe you my life—though you know that I *struck* you, and that I never can forgive myself for that act unless I can part with you in amity. You need not turn away,—I see the marks of my hand on your forehead. If I had been a murderer you could not have treated me more”—

“Dreux, Dreux, you don't know what you are talking about. You are killing me.”

“I do know, and I will say it;—if I had struck those blows with intent to murder you, and knowing that it was you, you could not have treated me more cruelly.”

“You can scarcely stand,—you are excited and oppressed.”

“I am sick with the recollection of that yawning gulf, and my feelings have been outraged, but I will not sit down, and I will not go. You shall

believe that I am grateful; and you shall shake hands with me."

"I will," said Allerton, coming up to him, with a sigh. "Sit down, or you will faint. Let me open the window; there,—now drink this wine. You are excited, and don't understand—how should you? If you did, you would not grudge me these two or three bruises."

Dreux drank the wine, and made an effort to rise.

"No, no; be quiet for a moment," said Allerton, speaking almost with the tenderness of a woman. "Turn your face to the air. You came upon me so suddenly that I had no time for consideration,—I could not overcome my—my consternation. Oh, how many thousand times your face, with that self-same look, has advanced upon me in my dreams. Oh, my accusing conscience!"

"I have nothing to accuse you of—nothing," said Dreux, faintly.

"Not that you know of. What, you must shake hands? Well.—I don't hate you, Dreux; I love you."

"If you do"—

"If I do I have taken a strange way of showing it. I was beside myself, and your random accusation struck me to the heart."

"I beg your pardon,—I am sorry; but I do not know to what you allude."

"Dreux, you rise,—what do you want to do?"

"It is past midnight; I wish to go back."

"Where?"

"To the inn. I will see you to-morrow."

"You will not go there, Dreux. My house is near at hand; you will come with me."

"We cannot understand each other,—we are much better apart."

"How wearily you speak. For your own sake we can never be friends again; but that, or something else, troubles you more—far more than I could have supposed possible."

"I know we cannot be friends, for I heard you preach to-night, and if your change of principles is not to bring us together, nothing can; but I *should* have liked to know the reason."

"Prospects have changed with you, Dreux; and you have, I know, come through many anxieties. Have you felt them much?"

"Very much. I had no friend to stand by me."

"Well," said Allerton, bitterly, "it is some comfort to know that you would have been none the better for *my* standing by you. But it grows late, and you will come with me."

Dreux made no further objection; he was thoroughly dispirited. As they went through the dark silent street, Allerton suddenly said, "Did you come straight from Westport? Did you come here on purpose to find me?"

"No; I came to speak to-morrow at your local Meeting. I did not know you were here till I saw you in the desk."

"I have been out for two days, and had not heard who was the deputation."

"If you had known, perhaps you would have kept out of my way"—

"This is my house, Dreux," interrupted Allerton. It stood close to the church; Allerton was admitted by an old housekeeper, a slight repast was set on the table, and a room was soon prepared for the guest. Allerton seemed ill at his ease, restless, and agitated; it was quite a relief to both when the room was declared to be ready; and whatever doubts, speculations, fears, or perplexities, might trouble the mind of either, no explanation was asked or offered, and each was heartily thankful to find himself alone.

They met the next morning to a late breakfast, and it was apparent that the night's rest, or rather the night's solitude (for neither had slept), had made an alteration on each.

Allerton's face was overclouded with gloom, and his manner painfully restless and changeable; he seemed struggling against varied feelings. Now he tried to look calm and cold,—now a sudden gleam of his old affectionate hilarity would shine for an instant in his eyes, and be checked almost as soon as it appeared.

Dreux, on the contrary, was now self-possessed,

and far more cordial than before ; his old manner had returned, but he asked not a single question and betrayed no curiosity. His expression and every action seemed to say,—“I will have you back as a friend, if it be possible ; and if you will give no explanation, I will do without one.”

The Meeting, which was to be at four in the afternoon, supplied them with conversation during breakfast. Afterwards Allerton sat, looking pale and restless, till, suddenly, Dreux opened the glass-door of his study and proposed a walk in the garden ; he came out mechanically. The garden was close upon the sea-shore, which, at that point, was nearly flat ; they stood, looking about them,—then sauntered back. Allerton became conscious that Dreux was systematically breaking down the barrier of distance which he had erected between them ; he talked of their familiar acquaintance ; then he took hold of his arm ; then he began to talk of his own affairs. Allerton struggled hard against this, but it would not do, his guest approached nearer and nearer ; he was now perfectly at his ease, and nothing could make him otherwise. Insensibly Allerton was beguiled into conversation ; he forgot himself, and asked a few questions. Dreux answered so frankly, and with such perfect good faith, that he found himself the repository of his most private affairs. He had got a terrible heart-ache ; it did it no good to hear Dreux talk as he had been used to do to him, and to him only,—

telling him candidly all his feelings and fancies, as reserved people will to those whom they wholly trust. Allerton felt that he had never so talked since they parted, and that now he was doing battle manfully for the continuance of the privilege. He would not give it up, and he was now working so hard at the barrier that it must have inevitably given way, if a servant had not come up to them and reminded Allerton of some piece of clerical duty.

"I will be back shortly," he said, in a distraught, restless manner.

He returned in half an hour. Behold, the beloved unbidden guest had fallen asleep on his study sofa! he had been awake the whole night,—that Allerton knew, for he had listened for hours to footsteps pacing overhead. He softly drew near, and contemplated him with a peculiar and most painful sensation.

Tall, somewhat slender, and youthful-looking, he possessed in his waking hours a gravity and weight which added several years to his appearance. Now this gravity had given way to an easy expression of confiding tranquillity. A listless smile parted his lips, and reminded the looker-on of his sister. He was asleep, down to his very finger-ends.

It was a chilly morning, and Allerton passed into the hall and brought a shepherd's plaid to lay over him. As he folded it across him he opened his eyes, and, without any expression of surprise at

finding himself so tended, turned and fell asleep again, with Allerton still bending over him.

No need for apology,—he was entirely at home. He had been tired, now he was resting, and nothing could make him think that this was not the best place possible to take it in. He floated out into the land of dreams. Most of them were pleasant ones; perhaps the more so because, being a very light sleeper, he was conscious, after a long time, of a warm hand upon his forehead, moving back his hair.

Light sleepers can reason, after a fashion, even in their dreams: he followed out a long train of misty, entangled reasonings in his. He thought it odd that Allerton should so recoil from him when awake, and now should keep his hand upon his forehead, and touch the little mark of the wound with such a brotherly kiss.

He was conscious of a home feeling, and a sense of security, even in sleep; but when he at length awoke, and looked at Allerton, he found him moody and miserable as ever.

He had built up the barrier between them again, and, with his arms upon his study-table, sat regarding him with a pained, uneasy air.

Dreux set to work to throw his barrier down. "Allerton, I'm very hungry,—I want some lunch."

Allerton smiled at this appeal, and rang the bell, but he kept such stern guard over himself that he preserved as distant a manner as ever.

The lunch speedily appeared. Allerton assisted his guest, but he sat with his untouched plate before him, gazing out of the window. He was beginning to distrust his powers; he should never be able to break down this wall of rock; he had been mistaken,—there had come no change over Allerton, which made his own conduct appear right and inevitable; he did not want him, and was restless and anxious for him to be gone.

While he slept his face had looked so youthful and easy that Allerton had felt as if a few months of bitter remorse had made *him* many years the senior; when he awoke, his features had been lighted up with the old cordial smile. But now a cloud of gloom, pain, and wounded feeling had gathered over his brow. He did not touch the offered meal, and sat silent a long time. He had lost confidence; his old reserve had again crept over him. He had been repulsed, and could not recover.

His host endured this with difficulty. "I thought," he said, "you told me you were hungry?"

No answer. His late friend poured out a glass of water and drank it hastily; then he rose slowly, left the room, and, with equal deliberation, walked up stairs. At the top he paused to consider which way he should turn.

Allerton hastily crossed the hall, ran up, and asked what he wanted.

"I want to find my room, and get my carpet-bag."

Allerton would not hear of it;—was urgent, impetuous. He made him come down again, shut the door of his study, and turning the key, exclaimed, in a low, hurried voice, "Dreux! are you determined,—are you quite bent upon our still being friends?"

"No, I do not wish to force myself upon you; I wish to go."

"You shall not go till you have eaten something."

"I cannot eat;—you will not give me what I want."

"Sit down."

"No, I will not sit down again;—I must go."

"What have I done within the last few minutes to give you this sudden resolution?"

"Nothing new,—nothing more. But you have not yet forgiven me, and I cannot, and I will not, remain where I am not wanted."

"Forgiven you!—forgiven you!"

"Yes, forgiven me. I thought it probable at first that you would have forgiven me, but I find" ——

"Will you look at me?"

"Well!"

"What do you see?"

"I see a man who was once my friend,—for whom I cared far more than he ever thought,—

who has no true reason *now* for resentment against me,—and who has no power even now to alienate my regard, for I choose to retain it.”

“Dreux!”

“It is useless your trying to make me believe that all your old affection for me is past and over. Why you try, is a mystery that I cannot solve. Why you torment yourself and me by feigning this utter want of interest I cannot fathom. You *have* some kindness left for me still. What does it matter *else* to you that I carry a mark on my forehead? Why must you needs investigate it?—it’s nothing to you. Allerton! Allerton! what have I done now?”

He asked the question almost vehemently, for Allerton had started as if he had been struck a blow. He made a gesture of entreaty, and staggered with difficulty to his chair; the veins of his temples were swelled almost to bursting, and he pointed to the window, as if he wanted air.

It was thrown open hastily, and a glass of water held to his lips.

“Dreux,” he said, as his late friend, again overstepping the barrier, laid a hand upon his shoulder, and looked anxiously in his face, “you are very kind;—do you know who you are speaking to?”

“To a man who saved my life last night.”

“There are no other words in the world that it would have done me so much good to hear, and that it would have been so like yourself to say, even if

you had known the truth. Well, but do you see no change in me?"

"Yes, I see that you have suffered; I hear it in the sound of your voice. I also see" ——

"What, Dreux? Well, I have suffered;—the curse of Cain I sometimes feel upon me."

"There is no sin that the blood of Christ cannot wash away."

"*No sin.* I have repeated those words many thousand times. It washes away, but it does not save us from the consequences of sin in this world. We may hope to live at peace in heaven with those against whom we have sinned too deeply to deserve any intercourse on earth. What! I have startled you at last! I feel your hand tremble."

"Not with distrust,—only with suspense. It is your manner, far more than your words" ——

"Well, take your hand from my shoulder, for I should not wish to feel it suddenly withdrawn when I tell you the truth. There,—now look me in the face. I am a murderer, Dreux, in will, and almost in deed."

"A murderer in will!"

"Yes, I tell you; and, having begun, I will tell you the rest. I have kept away from you as a duty, but you have found me out at last. And now I must tell you what I would fain have had known only to me and my Maker; least of all I would have had you know it. I would not blacken myself where I would fain have stood well. But you must

know, for you want to make a friend of me again."

"I desire no confidence, Allerton. I would be your friend without it if you would let me."

"You would; but I am not quite base enough to permit that. I will tell you all, and you shall do as you please."

"You are excited now; I will not hear anything till you are calm; and even then, I had rather the matter was left, as you have said, between you and your Maker."

"Dreux, your presence while you are ignorant of it, and your friendly confidence, are daggers in my heart. To have you with me, and to hear you say such things as you have said *twice* during these few hours, would be far more than my fortitude could sustain. I told you that I was a murderer. Don't look so much aghast; it was you that I injured,—*you*. Do you hear me? You will not wake from this and find it a dream. Go and sit down, a long way from me. I have begun now, and I will go on to the end. Why do you put your hand to your head?—does it ache?"

Dreux took away his hand, and looked earnestly at Allerton. His remarks had several times appeared irrelevant; now he was excited and agitated.

"My dear Allerton," Dreux began, "you cannot be surprised if I feel a little bewildered; and if I show it" ——

"Was that all? I thought you put your hand to your forehead as if you were in pain."

"O these strange suspicions!" thought Dreux; "what do they portend?—I have a slight headache," he explained, with a sigh of irrepressible anxiety, "and I have got a habit of putting up my hand since my accident. Of course one cannot expect such a thing to pass over, leaving no bad effects whatever."

Allerton rose and went to the window, as if he felt half suffocated. "You were in the church last night," he presently said; "why did you not come to me in the vestry?"

Dreux explained to him how he had returned to the church, and how he had failed to overtake him, as he left it hastily with the wine.

"I understand it all now," replied Allerton. "Among the trees you passed a cottage."

"I did not remark one."

"You did, however. After service the man who lives there came and asked me to pray with his wife, who is in a decline. I went, and stayed with her a long while; but just as I was about to leave her, she became so faint, that I ran back to the vestry to get some wine; the woman revived after she had taken it; and as I sat by her she said she saw some one going quickly up among the trees. I could scarcely believe her; for no one can get in there at night after the church-gates are locked, unless by climbing them. I declared she was mistaken;

but she persisted, and said it was a gentleman ; then I was alarmed, for I knew it must be a stranger. We left her with her daughter, and I and the husband ran out after the stranger to warn him of his danger. You seemed to be bent on rushing up straight to your destruction. I suppose you took us for thieves or murderers,—no unlikely supposition: an unfortunate man was murdered there last year for the sake of his watch, and his body thrown over the cliffs. I got so out of breath with my desperate race, that I could not shout to you. My heart was in my throat, for I perceived that my very eagerness in running on made you rush more blindly up, heedless of the booming of the water, which otherwise you might have heard. When I had seized you, I was not prepared for the strength with which you grappled with me, resolutely dragging me still further and further to the edge.”

“ If the moon had only come out then ! ”

“ If the moon had come out then, you would not have struck me ; was that what you would say ? But then I should not have saved your life ; for the light would have warned you of your danger. But you are too generous to wish you had not lifted your hand against me ; at least if you could know all that I have suffered since we parted you would be glad. Dreux, you are amazed, you look at me with wonder. Well, I will tell you why ; but just now I must rest. It comes upon me with such a sudden,

irresistible happiness, the thought that I should have saved your life—yours—I must think on it a while. No, say nothing, sit where you are, let me think my thoughts out, the bitter will come presently.”

He turned from the window, and, as was usual with him when excited, began slowly to pace the room.

“Dreux, you are very patient with me, you always were; well—I will not try you any longer—the bitter returns in greater force than ever—I will sit down and lay it all before you.”

He sat silent a few minutes, till Dreux made a movement of irrepressible agitation; the suspense was getting too much for him.

“When I left you that morning,” Allerton began at length, speaking with suppressed emotion, “I felt more like a fiend than a human being. In the blindness of my passion I repeated that I hated and despised you—yes, and your sister also; yet in the depth of my heart, I knew you had acted consistently, and I hated your principles even more than yourself.”

He looked intently out of the window, and continued in a lower tone: “I went home. I madly vowed that I would never speak to you again; I acknowledged to myself that I had known how it would be from the beginning; and so I had; but I had so resolutely smothered the knowledge, that it came upon me like a thunder-clap. Dreux,

I entered my house—my hand was on the latch of the study-door, when my groom met me and inquired what time my horse was wanted for you. It enraged me just then to hear him mention your name. I told him to hold his tongue, and went in. I don't know what induced the man to follow me, for he must have seen that I was in a passion. Perhaps it was that my condemnation might be the more complete. He asked me the question again, and said, 'Shall I go round and inquire, sir?' It only inflamed me to hear him say it and persist in it, as if he supposed I had not heard him. I told him the horse was not wanted; he said, rather sulkily, that if you rode your own horse, he knew you would be thrown. I cursed you in my heart, if not with my lips. I muttered, as I flung the door to, that nothing would please me better."

"Don't say any more, Allerton," cried his auditor, in a tone of the deepest agitation; "what is this to me? why bring it up again? I cannot bear to hear it; pray spare me; remember last night. If you are not satisfied with what you did for me then"—

"If I am not satisfied," repeated Allerton in the same suppressed tone. "Oh yes, and I am deeply thankful; it shows the goodness of God, in not only forgiving that murderous sin, but sparing me to be serviceable to the man whom I had injured. I told you that I believed I hated you. I fortified myself

in this feeling. Dreux, strange to say, my man came again, and knocked at my door. I felt momentary qualm of conscience. I thought it a little odd; but I flung open the door and demanded how he dared interrupt me. He muttered some apology, and seemed aghast to see me in such a rage; and yet he muttered again, was I sure Mr. Dreux did not want the horse? I don't know what I said. I was beside myself; but I denied that it was wanted, and told him to come again at his peril! Oh, Dreux, it sickens me to reflect on that day; my rage grew as I thought on what you had done. I drank a good deal of wine after dinner, for my passion had exhausted me; after that I believe I fell asleep on my study sofa. Dreux, you must hear me to the end."

"No more," urged his auditor; "God has spared me, why need I know all this?"

"Why need you? Because I cannot bear the sight of that smile of yours, while you are in ignorance. I would rather see you look shocked and horrified, as you do now, than see you determined to confide in me, and hear you lament that you lifted your hand against me."

"I will never lament it again, if you will only spare me now."

"Spare you a *little*, just the little remains of your ideal, and not tear it down and soil it in the dust, and despoil it of every vestige of its beauty. Dreux, I know you thought well of me."

"I did, and do."

"Well, Dreux, it was dusk when I awoke, and started upright at a peculiar noise of sobbing. I saw my servants crying in the doorway and wringing their hands, my old man-servant crying as much as any of them.

"They came in, but seemed afraid to speak; for they knew my affection for you, but not our quarrel. I asked what was the matter; they told me the most horrible story that ever my ears had listened to: that you had been thrown and dragged a great distance by your horse; that you were still alive, but there was no hope; and your horse—that was the most horrible thing of all at the moment—your horse had run back like a mad creature, and rushed, covered with foam and dust, into the open door of my stables."

"Why need that have shocked you?" urged Dreux, scarcely knowing what he said. "Had he not been put up there times out of number?"

"I tell you he rushed into my stables covered with blood and foam; he had injured himself, and died in the night. I had thought that I hated you; the passing away of that delusion brought with it misery beyond what I had supposed it possible our nature could endure. My people had expected to see me overpowered; I was more, I was frantic. I tore my hair, I called upon God to revenge you upon me. They talked of what a pleasure it must be to me now to think what good friends we had

always been; every word they said was a dagger in my heart; they could do nothing with me, and at last they sent for a physician; and I remember very little more of that miserable night, or of the next day."

"And now I have heard it, Allerton; and you must say no more till you have heard me."

"What would you say, Dreux?"

"That I entreat you—that I *expect* you to forget this as completely as I will do. No, not to forget it, then; but to think no more of it as a thing that need keep us asunder—never to think of it at all without remembering last night also."

Allerton remained silent; he seemed in a great measure relieved of the load which had oppressed him, but did not take the offered hand without a gesture of pain. He put it aside again, and motioned to Dreux to go back to his seat, going on with his narrative, as if he desired at once to say all that was on his mind.

"Dreux, those were wretched days. I got up from my bed and walked about, and I saw that every human being I met pitied me; it was written on their faces; I saw it, and almost wished they could have known the truth. You were in great danger; pains were taken to conceal the fact from me; but I possessed myself not only of the facts of the case, but of all the fears of the attendants.

"All your friends and all my own came to me to comfort me. They were amazed and alarmed at my

state of mind. They all said the same thing. They all pitied me. Their reproaches would have been easy to bear in comparison. But I was dumb. I sat in my study, and neither could answer them, nor exert myself to send them away. But everything that could torture me they said, for there was no kind of praise that ever was bestowed on human sympathy and friendship that they did not lavish upon mine. This went on for three or four days; then I became restless, and wandered about almost ceaselessly night and day.

“I went and called on the Patons, for there I thought I should hear some particulars. I was a good deal altered by remorse, but a sort of dead calm had come over me, which I thought nothing could move. I began to talk; the ladies tried to answer me, but one by one they left the room. The mother, who alone remained, could scarcely speak for tears. This put the climax to my sufferings. I would have told her everything but for the utter weariness that had come upon me. I went away, but I was determined to see you, and I did. Dreux, you are worse than any of them. Don't you remember what you suffered? Don't you know the peril which threatened not only life but reason? and you are speechless with pity! I have seen you often this morning put your hand to your head. Such a blow could scarcely pass, you told me, and leave no bad effects, and yet you look as if there was nothing you would not do to lighten its effects

on me. Well, I saw you by night. You were half delirious. I saw your sister sleeping at the foot of your miserable bed, and I repented. I had been stunned before; now my awakened feelings of tenderness added keenness to remorse. I dragged on another week, and then it was given out that your danger was over. I could not believe it; but the next day the report was confirmed. Then a new feeling came over me—I knew that I never could look you in the face again. I left the town, resolved not to return. I wanted exertion—my mind preyed upon my health. I thought change would do me good. I travelled. I walked. I toiled among the mountains. Every day I walked till I was worn out with fatigue, but my sleep was not sweet.

“When I had been absent a month, I went to the Bishop. My altered appearance showed my state of health, and he soon saw that something more than I spoke of was the matter with me. I easily got a six months’ leave of absence. I went into Wales. I exerted my bodily strength to the utmost, but the same terrible fears haunted me. If you had died who would have been your murderer? As it was, you might never be restored to health, and then what would become of *me*?

“I had no friend, no person to speak to. I felt as if the lot of Cain had come upon me—to wander—the murderer of my brother, with one more curse in addition to his, one more ingredient in my bitter cup than ever poisoned his,—that I loved *my* brother,

I constantly thought with remorse of what I had done—that in the distance and apart, brooding over my everlasting heart-ache, he seemed to me far better and more to be desired as a friend and companion than ever he had done before. The heart has no bounds for its capacity for suffering, nor for loving. One pain brings another. All my forgotten sins rose up before me with this crowning one at their head.

“In the silence of my life I thought of you both incessantly. If the eye is not satisfied with seeing, how much less is the heart satisfied with loving! I still worshipped my idols of clay, but in the blindness of my misery I reproached my Maker, ‘Thou hast taken away my GODS, and what have I more?’

“I got a letter one day from Hewly. He said you were much better. You had read prayers and were to preach the next Sunday. I was extremely thankful, but it did not seem to make my crime the less. At first my resolution never to see you again, never to seek any further intercourse with you, or bring you any more within the influence of a temper so violent, had seemed so great a sacrifice that I thought it half atoned; now that foolish fancy was gone, and the weight of my sins had become almost intolerable. I thought there was nothing I would not do to be released from it—nothing.

“I had done many things, and it grew heavier and harder to bear. On the Sunday when I knew you were to preach, I went out and wandered up

the barren mountain which faced the farm-house where I lodged. I came to a cleft in the rock, where a quantity of broom hung out and made a shelter.

"I sat down and took out a Bible, but I did not read. I thought of you and of your sister, and your voice seemed to come back to me, saying such things as you often had done in our arguments and discussions. My mind was empty of comfort—I could not think very connectedly. I unclasped the Bible, and a letter of yours fell out. You had written it while you were away with Elinor; within it were the notes of a sermon on this text,—‘There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.’"

Allerton paused when he came to this place, but Dreux made no effort to speak; he sat with his eyes intently fixed upon him. He presently went on:—

"I was pleased at the sight of your writing. I read over the letter, and it beguiled me for a few minutes from the weariness of my own thoughts. When I had finished it I picked up the notes of your sermon and began to read *them*. It was for the first time, Dreux. They began with some remarks upon the unsatisfying nature of all earthly affection—they asserted that love was originally the best gift of God to man,—that all his happiness flowed from it,—that now, from this greatest blessing sprung our keenest misfortunes and sorrows. It went on to describe the wretchedness of a man who, having fixed his affections on the earthly, has not

the heavenly to turn to when they are taken away.

"I thought it strange you should have chosen to send me such a subject,—I, who was then so well content with the earthly, so wrapt round with the love and the brotherhood that I had chosen.

"But I read on. There is a Friend. It described the sympathy of Christ with all human suffering; among others, with that restless worm, *remorse*. It described the bitterness of heart under which I was then suffering, and offered the tenderness of that Friend as a precious substitute for the loss of all others.

"Dreux, you must not interrupt me now. I know what you mean. I see plainly that you will still be my friend. Since it is so I will not gainsay you. It was only for your own sake that I wanted to have it otherwise. Well, I had often said to myself that there was nothing I would not do to relieve myself from the intolerable restlessness that oppressed me; but I had never thought of the religion which you had taken care I should (theoretically) be well acquainted with. I went on reading, and the notes unfolded the scheme of salvation, as you had so often done before. It was familiar, and yet I could scarcely believe that it was truly the same. If these things really were so, how happy, I thought, for me.

"I rested my forehead upon my hands, and through the hours of that long, sunny morning I

began to think that though I had despised these things when I was well with my own heart, yet now that I had become vile and hateful in my own eyes, and now that all peace and happiness were over and I was utterly alone, perhaps they might prove a solace to me,—the more so, I thought, because they were yours.

“The longer I sat there the more these thoughts pressed upon me. I was wretched. Here seemed an offer of peace. If, without any merit or fitness of my own, I could be forgiven, I thought it would be a blessed thing, and every sound that reached me in that lonely place seemed to be burdened with the words, ‘There is a Friend.’ In my own esteem I was far less worthy to apply to this Friend than I had been in the days of my prosperity. I was no murderer then.

“I thought of this a while longer. ‘But no,’ I said, ‘there is no other way. I will try this. I will set my foot on board this ark of refuge. If I remain thus I must perish, and if I go forward I can but die.’

“My soul assented to the certainty of that truth of which you had so often reminded me, that no amendment of life could atone for committed sin, and make a man the more fit to ask forgiveness. I thought the only hope was to throw myself on the pity of God for the past and the future, through that Friend whom I now perceived to be more desirable, more excellent than the sons of men.

"I do not remember that I uttered any distinct petition beyond those verses of Scripture which presented themselves to me.

"I read the rest of your notes; they set forth the goodness of that heavenly Friend. I perceived (and not without something like surprise, Dreux) that my sins had been against *Him*, and in the silence of the place, I prayed for mercy and forgiveness. To my bitter remorse for past sins was added a new, overpowering sorrow,—a scarcely understood affection for that heavenly Friend began to dawn in my heart. I remembered that passage of Scripture, and assented to it in the depths of my soul, 'They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn.'"

After a short silence, he went on again,—

"Why need this distress you? I am telling you of the most blessed period of my life. I went down to the farm-house, where I lodged. My sorrow was mingled with astonishment that I should never have seen these things before. I remembered continually more and more of the conversations we had had together. Your words seemed now to have a new application. I wondered how it was, not knowing that the natural man *cannot* discern the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned.

"I felt that night very unwell, though not so restless as usual. The next day one of the children of the house was taken extremely ill with fever, and

in the evening the mother sickened. I would have left the house, but the illness I had felt the day before increased upon me. I did not know what was the matter, but as far as I was capable of it in my then condition, I enjoyed a kind of peace. In the middle of the night, both I and the mistress of the house were raving with delirium; it proved to be small-pox. The country Doctor was sent for; the cases were dangerous. I was neglected, and left much to myself,—nearer interests pressed upon the poor people. I was often delirious, but my distracted fancy was always constant to one theme. I had no hope but in Christ. I had put off the burden upon Him, and had said, ‘Undertake for me.’ The woman of the house died, and a child; the other child and I slowly recovered. I could scarcely speak a word of Welsh, and they knew no English. The accommodation was most wretched, but God’s mercy spared me to live and praise Him, and even to preach His Gospel to others. During the tedious weeks of my recovery I thought much and earnestly. The Holy Scriptures were my constant solace. The offer of free salvation became a certain, most undoubted fact to me. I closed with it, and received peace.

“The surgeon who had attended me wished me to go south; therefore I came into Cornwall, and finding the vicar of this place willing to be friendly with me, I helped him a little during the winter, and now he is ill, I take all the duty for him.”

Having brought his narrative to this point, he got

nd walked about the room, almost surprised to see powerfully it had moved his friend. It was so liar to himself that he had uttered it with calm-, and the former events especially had been so present to his mind that to put them into words a relief instead of a pain to him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MINIATURE.

THE meeting was over, and in the dusk of evening they walked home together towards Allerton's house.

Allerton, who seemed inexpressibly relieved now that he had unburthened his mind, talked with something of his old cheerfulness; but there was one subject on which he did not touch, though several good opportunities had been given him. Dreux felt that it was not for him to be the first to mention his sister; and as his next greatest wish with regard to Allerton was to have him back at Westport, he introduced that subject, and began earnestly to urge his return.

Allerton, who seemed to take pleasure in being entreated, allowed him to go on for a long while. At length he appeared convinced, and said, certainly it did seem a duty to come and preach against those errors which he had formerly approved.

"And I want a curacy," said Dreux, laughing.

"What! you do? But you told me that you would not go back to Westport,"—for Dreux had

related much of the quarrel between Hewly and himself in the morning. "Dreux, you could not be *my* curate,—*you*, so much my superior in standing, in experience, in everything. I could not consent to that."

"You had rather see me some other man's curate? You seriously think I should be better off as curate in some place where I am unknown, and under some other man?"

Allerton reflected a while, and decided to close with the offer. He could then see that he did not overwork himself; it would give him an opportunity to live down the calumnies which had been raised against him; and as he himself felt all the awkwardness of changing his side in a place where he was so well known, he perceived the advantage of a friend like Dreux to back him. It pained him to think of standing in such a position towards him: but he reflected on his altered prospects. With whom, he thought, would he feel them so little as with himself? Who, from feelings of either affection or duty, would naturally and inevitably care for him so unceasingly? His health might now be very different to what it had been; who would be so quick to observe it—who would have so much hold over him? "For," Allerton thought, "for my sake he will try to keep well; he will have the pleasure of companionship which he values,—for this, which I must feel, and bitterly, to the end of my days, seems not at all to have struck him as I should have thought;

he has as much confidence in me as ever. Well, I will accept his offer, and all the advantages it brings with it."

"Dreux, if nothing better presents itself for you, I shall be heartily glad to accede to your proposal."

"You were so long considering that I was about to withdraw it."

"I had much rather be *your* curate. You shall do just as you please, Dreux."

"Shall I? But mind you don't let me domineer over you, Allerton. Your curates have an easy life of it. I often thought at Westport, that to be your curate, and let you do the work, was as gentlemanly an opening for the ambition of a lazy young M.A. as could be desired."

"Well, it gives me pleasure to hear you laugh, even at my own expense. I hope your sister is well?"

Both parties had been thinking of her for some time; nevertheless, Dreux started on hearing her name.

"She has been ill," he replied, with rather a constrained manner, for he did not know how Allerton now might feel towards her.

"Not very ill?"

"Yes, in great danger; but she is much better."

"If I had known that, I believe I *must* have written."

"I still cannot understand why you did not write to me months ago."

"Not even now, Dreux, when we have got upon this subject?"

"I would have written, if I had been you."

"If I had written, what could I have told you?"

"Part of what you told me this morning; no one could so much rejoice to hear it. Did you give me credit for no anxiety about you?"

"And if I had written so much, what would you have expected my next step to be?"

"Perhaps to return."

"Dreux, you answer with as much hesitation as if you thought it possible for a man who had heartily loved a woman to forget her in six months. If I could have done that, I could and would have written to you; even as it was, I thought of doing so continually. I had constant arguments with myself; but the new religion was precious, for it had raised me out of the very mire of despair. How, then, could I make it a stepping-stone whereby to obtain what I could not hope to have without it? Dreux, if I could so far have departed from uprightness of mind as to do that, I should have begun next to question the very reality of the change which had passed upon me. Even if you had received my tale with the most unquestioning faith, it would have availed me nothing. I must have endured the life-long doubts and dreads of an at least *supposed* self-deceiver."

"My dear Allerton," Dreux answered, "you acted

duly detailed; and if, after that, you think I have any chance—I mean you to tell her of the horse—of our quarrel”—

“And how you saved my life. Well, if you *desire* it, I will. You shall find a letter waiting for you at Portsmouth.”

Early on Monday morning he reached Southampton, and, after arranging to speak at a Meeting there on Wednesday, crossed over to the Isle of Wight and went on to Shanklin. Elinor was quite blooming, and in easy spirits. It was some time since they had met, and there was much to be said; but there was an early dinner ordered, for their aunt retained the old-fashioned notion that no one could “come off a journey” without being quite famished. As much as possible, therefore, of this dinner had to be consumed, and a great many questions of Miss Theresa’s answered, before they could think of going out; but at length they effected a move, and, leaving the old lady to doze in her chair, walked forth to explore the Chine.

There, as they sat under the trees, talking about his travels, he quietly introduced Allerton’s name, described their meeting, and his own sensations on hearing him preach.

Elinor listened with intense interest.

“I thought it singular,” he added, “that Allerton should have made no effort to renew our friendship.”

“If I had been you,” said Elinor, “I should have

felt very much hurt." And not all her joy at seeing her brother could make her feel at ease.

He then went on to describe, as well as his agitation would permit, the after-events of the evening: how Allerton had saved his life, at the peril of his own. He next repeated their morning's conversation; and, as he had been desired, gave Allerton's self-accusations, as well as the facts of the quarrel; but told by him, and touched with his feelings towards the actor, they certainly were softened.

Elinor was tolerably self-possessed; she said nothing, and kept hoping there would be some slight reference to herself, but her brother neither mentioned Allerton's intended visit, nor his acknowledgment of continued attachment. While she sat reflecting, he told her how he had persuaded Allerton to return to Westport, and that he intended to be his curate.

Thereupon followed a long silence.

"How does Mr. Allerton look?" said Elinor, breaking it at length.

"Perfectly well, but not precisely the same. When I saw him in the pulpit, I perceived that he had become calmer. You know he has naturally high spirits and a cheerful disposition,—doubtless he has still; but, when he was not agitated by the things he had to tell, he looked exactly like that little portrait which, no doubt, you remember."

He took the little picture from his pocket and

into the dining-room, shut the door, and asked him to give her the picture, which he did at once, without smiling or appearing to see anything odd in her request. He then went up stairs to talk to his aunt, leaving her to her own reflections.

She stood some time below, scarcely thinking of anything connectedly, but pleased to look at the little picture. At length, having secured it in a safe place, she walked slowly upstairs and opened the door of the drawing-room; her entrance, she observed, put a stop to a conversation which had been going on between her brother and her aunt, but, as the latter was extremely fond of cooking up little insignificant mysteries and having private conferences, she thought nothing of it.

"And what sort of a looking man is he, Arthur?" she heard her aunt say. "Is he handsome?"

"Handsome—well, no; I don't think he is—not exactly."

"But can't you give me the least notion?—he's not a *pokey*-looking, little knock-kneed fellow, I hope? and I hope he's not a—what I call sanctified—black hair, parted down the middle, and turn-up-eyed man, Arthur?"

"No; he's a fine, well-grown man, with an erect figure."

"Dear me, have you no better talent for description than that, Arthur? Has he a good voice?—has he insinuating manners?"

"Insinuating manners, aunt!" exclaimed Elinor, laughing, "what an idea! Have you hired him, Arthur?"

"Hired him!" repeated the said Arthur, turning round with a look of genuine bewilderment.

"You are talking of the new footman, are you not?"

"Do you think my aunt would take so much interest in a footman?"

Elinor nodded and smiled, for she had heard little for the last week but conjectures as to what this redoubtable footman would be like, he having been recommended by her brother, and not yet inspected by his proposed mistress.

As Elinor stood winding a skein of silk upon the backs of two chairs, Dreux came up to her, lifted her face, and kissed her with a smile.

"My dear, I'm afraid you are a little blunder-headed thing," he said. "At any rate you have a curious habit of jumping at conclusions, like the rest of your sex."

"Then he is a good-looking man, Arthur?" continued Mrs. Theresa. "I hope you wouldn't deceive me in that respect?"

"Aunt, you'll be charmed with him."

"And that's really all you have to say about him?"

"Unless it would interest you to know that he weighs about a stone more than I do?"

"Ah, you men are all alike. You delight to tease."

"Dear aunt," said Elinor, still thinking of the footman, "if he is honest and does his work well, what does it matter how he looks in livery? I hope he will clean the plate better than Simpson does."

The entrance of the said Simpson with the tea-things made a diversion in the conversation. They had a very silent meal, the aunt for once being deep in thought,—so deep, that she actually never observed that Elinor, in a fit of abstraction, had let the urn overflow the teapot.

It was still quite early, and Dreux took his sister out again for a walk on the beach. She wished to prolong it, but he was in a fidget, and kept consulting his watch that they might not be out later than half-past eight. However, they went on the water for half an hour, and it was beginning to get both chilly and dusk when they reached the house. As they entered the door, he said, suddenly, "Oh, Elinor, I expect a friend this evening. I suppose he can get a bed somewhere in the village?"

"Undoubtedly!" she answered. "Who is it?"

"Who is it?" he replied, with a lurking smile in his eyes. "Oh, it's a clerical friend of mine." Having given this information, he began to hum a tune, and Elinor did not say another word.

They found Mrs. Theresa in a very impatient state. "She really had supposed Arthur had more

sense than to stay out so late. In fact, the many frights he had given her about his sister when he was a boy were enough to make any watchful aunt afraid to trust him. Such pranks, indeed! Since the day when she had come home without her shoe"—

"But I'm not a boy now, aunt, and you need not fear, I think."

"Ah, it's very well to talk; but it gave me quite a turn, quite a palpitation when you were so late in. Shall I ever forget the day, Elinor, when he singed your hair with the curling-irons? 'What a wonderful smell of hair there is, ma'am,' Morris said to me. (Morris is a careful creature.) Up we both go to the very top of the house; she enters the nursery door first and gives a great scream.

"'Oh, ma'am, Master Arthur!'

"And there he was in all his glory, as grave as a judge, and, the pretty lamb! all the curls singed off her dear head. Bless her heart! how angry I was!

"'I'll tell you what, Molyneux,' I said to his father, 'if that boy doesn't disgrace the name of Dreux before he's done—' but he only laughed, poor man. That was in 18—. I really forget the date, but I remember it was only a few months before his death. 'Ah,' I said to him when his papa died, 'no wonder poor papa's gone to heaven, such a naughty boy as you are. It's all your fault.' And I shall never forget how he cried, and screamed, and tried to get into the room."

Having brought these lively recollections to a close, the old lady got up, and remarking that it was past the half-hour, proceeded:—

“I think I shall ask for your arm now, Arthur, and go up stairs, that I may be out of the way.”

“Oh, then, my aunt knows that some one is coming,” thought Elinor, getting really agitated. “Is it possible that it can be Mr. Allerton?”

When her brother came in, he stood looking out of the window, and she sat upon a couch, unable to enter into conversation.

“What time do you expect your friend?” she said at length, in what was meant to be a careless tone.

“Just at nine o’clock,” he replied, and Elinor’s heart began to beat quick, for it wanted but ten minutes to the time.

“Here he is, Elinor,” said her brother, turning from the window, and at the same instant there was a loud knock at the street-door.

“Oh, don’t let him come in yet,” cried Elinor, and scarcely knowing what she said, she hastily rose and ran across the room to her brother, threw her arms round him, as if to prevent his leaving the room, and burst into tears, her face quite pale from the rapid beating of her heart.

Elinor heard the door open,—her brother held her to him with one arm, and held out his other hand to some one who was advancing into the room. The new comer said not a word. Elinor

did not attempt to raise her face, and wept more than ever.

"Do try to be more calm, my dearest," said her brother, as the guest stood a little withdrawn.

Elinor made an attempt to recover herself, but did not raise her face, and remained still clinging to him, as if she had been threatened with every danger that ever was heard of.

"I have something to say to you, Elinor. I have a favour to ask of you. You will not refuse me? Lift up your face, and listen."

Elinor raised her face.

"I have a favour to ask of you," he continued, "shall I tell you what it is?"

She managed to answer "Yes," and he went on.

"I have a friend, who is extremely dear to me,— I could scarcely tell you how dear, unless I could explain every reason why he should be. It would make me very happy to give him some token of my affection. I possess only one thing which seems to me of sufficient value to mark the strength of my regard. If I thought you would permit me to give this one thing to him"—

Elinor, surprised, lifted her face again, and, dusk as it was, she saw enough to know who the person standing by her must be.

Her brother drew away the hand by which she still held him, and said, "Let me tell you what it is that I wish to give him. Look, it is this."

Elinor looked earnestly in his face. The surprise made her calm.

"Does silence give consent?" he asked, after waiting for an answer.

Elinor now did not choose to speak, but released her hold of her brother, permitting him to put her hand into that of the stranger, who, thereupon, found his voice, and as she seemed inclined to listen to him, her brother left them to finish the interview by themselves.

He walked on the beach till eleven. When he returned he was not sorry to find that Elinor had retired. Allerton met him on the lawn before the house. He was about to return to the inn for the night. Dreux was glad to find him in a silent mood, and they parted with a mutual smile of intelligence.

The next morning he rose very early, for he intended to walk to Ryde, and pass over to Gosport, where he had to speak that morning. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when he returned to Shanklin by the stage, and found his sister and Allerton waiting for him at the rural inn.

Elinor and her aunt were seated in a little pony-chaise. The latter was very anxious to proceed with her airing, and Elinor had no sooner seen her brother and shaken him by the hand, than she was obliged to leave him with Allerton and accompany her aunt. Allerton's face showed that all was going

on to his satisfaction. He turned round so often to watch the pony-carriage, that their progress towards the house was slow. At length, when it was quite out of sight, Dreux said to him, "Well, I suppose everything goes on favourably, Allerton."

"Reasonably so, my dear fellow. But, Dreux, you look uncommonly well to-day!"

"I have nothing on my mind now. I have not felt so well for months. But how you turn from the subject, Allerton!"

"Have you had the head-ache since we parted?"

"Not once. I have thought with regret of what I said concerning my health. I now believe it was nothing but anxiety about you and Elinor which prevented my feeling as well as I ever did in my life."

Allerton looked gratefully at him.

"And after this bulletin I suppose I may inquire whether anything is decided!"

"Yes, we have decided that you shall perform the ceremony."

"The ceremony!" cried the brother-in-law elect; "well, that is getting on very fast indeed."

To which Allerton replied with this remarkable piece of advice: "Whenever you have a favour to ask of a lady, my dear fellow, take my advice,—don't be humble. I began with that feeling, and I found it a bad one."

"She remarked, that six months was the shortest engagement she could think of. I was dejected,

but I gave in. Then she thought the arrangements could not be made in less than a year. At last, when this had gone on some time, I suddenly thought rebellion might have a good effect. 'And pray, Mr. Allerton,' she said, 'how long a time do you propose?' 'Since you ask me, Miss Dreux,' I answered, 'I think six weeks would be a reasonable time.' She was astonished at my presumption, but I persisted. Then I proposed a compromise;—we were to meet each other half-way, and say three months. In fact, instead of giving way, I declared I would not wait any longer, and she instantly succumbed. After which she remarked that she particularly liked your old house at Westport, so I am going to try if I can get it, and shall have it furnished as fast as I can."

"You succumb, in that respect, to her wishes, then."

"Of course. She wishes the library-curtains to be green, Dreux, as they used to be,—green damask. The dining-room is to have a Turkey carpet."

"I am afraid your first rebellion will be your last. Really, you bid fair to be a very reasonable—that is, a very compliant husband."

"In all little things, of course, I shall give way."

"Of course, such little things as houses, furniture, servants, society, et cetera."

Allerton laughed. "I have fought for my own way once," he observed, "and got it. I have made

Elinor agree, that whenever the house is ready, she will be ready to occupy it. She thinks that will be three months; I know it will not be quite two. Having begun with firmness, I now feel that I may venture on indulgence."

"*You* begin with firmness! If ever you show firmness enough to insist upon Elinor's doing any one thing that she doesn't like, may I be there to see!"

It was not long before Mrs. Theresa returned to the house with her niece, and Dreux spent the rest of the evening in admiring Allerton's admirable tactics with the old lady.

He had already managed to win her over to his side, and to the astonishment of Elinor, and the amusement of Dreux, he contrived to get her assent and consent to every thing he proposed. He was not at all what is popularly called a man to "let the grass grow under his feet;" and when he turned from the aunt to indulge in a little talk with the niece, Mrs. Theresa expressed, by many nods and knowing looks to her nephew, how much she was pleased with his friend.

"And a thorough gentleman he looks," she whispered, "though he tells me his great-grandfather was a cheesemonger!"

"Did you ask him the question, aunt?"

"No; but I was just letting him know something about our family, you know, Arthur, my

dear ;—about the Holy Wars, and William the Conqueror, and all that.”

“ Oh, indeed.”

“ Yes ; no use letting him think we’re a plebeian race. And so he laughed, and told me that of his own accord.”

“ Indeed.”

“ Yes, and his grandfather was knighted. He was an Alderman of London, very rich. I forget what his father was.”

“ A clergyman, aunt.”

“ Humph ! he seems very fond of Elinor. I wish he would come away from the piano,—I want to ask him a few more questions ; and really, Arthur, you are quite stupid to-night. And so you are going to remain at Westport, after all ?”

“ Yes, I am going there with Allerton the day after to-morrow.”

Accordingly, the day after to-morrow, about six of the clock p.m., to the unbounded astonishment of Westport, Dreux and Allerton were seen sauntering up and down the square of grass before the almshouses, “just for all the world” (as the first old woman who spied them felicitously expressed it) “as if nothing had happened.”

There they were, in the body, and presently the heads of some two or three hundred old men and women were to be seen behind their bright casements, peering at them. They were both great

rites ;—Allerton, because, they said, he had a free way with him ; Dreux, because, since as gone, as they thought, for ever, they had revered his good qualities, real and imaginary. They walked nearly an hour in the evening sun, and no one interrupted them ; then, exactly as the church clock struck seven, they turned into back lane which ran behind the garden of Allerton's house, and went away together.

The news soon flew all over the town, and everybody called on Allerton, partly, perhaps, hoping to learn what had detained him so long. But how common is disappointment in this world ! Allerton

Dreux were always found together ; consequently, neither could be asked any question about the other, and the callers departed as wise as they came, saving that they saw no symptoms of their having quarrelled, and shrewdly suspected that they had been wrong in their former conjectures on that point ; they also were conscious of a certain change in Allerton's manner,—he was less impetuous, more reserved and guarded. Sunday, they thought, would separate this David and Jonathan, and then, perhaps, something might be made out of them to satisfy curiosity.

Sunday, however, came, and brought fresh surprise. Allerton read prayers in his own church, and Dreux preached for him. Astonishing ! he was still as a stone, as immovable as one of the

pillars, in his desk, while Dreux was making every arch and aisle echo with his eloquence overhead.

And yet it was obvious to the more acute that Allerton's calmness was constrained, and that he was ill at ease. There was a certain restless excitement in the flash of his eyes if he chanced to raise them for an instant, and a certain steadiness of expression, which made him look like a man who had nerved himself up to the performance of some difficult duty, and who could not breathe freely till it was over.

So the gossips thought, and they were right. Who does not know the shame of avowing an utter change of principles, of contradicting former assertions, and avowing former mistakes,—a shame felt quite as strongly by those who turn round from pure motives as those who change from interested ones. In politics, it requires courage in the man who changes sides to get up and avow it before his late constituents; how much more in religion, where any change is so much more important, it requires courage to avow former error, and disenchant those listeners who were well enough satisfied with the teaching of the past?

As the people had expected, in the evening Dreux read prayers. The church was densely crowded by puzzled foes and alarmed friends. Allerton did not keep them long in suspense. At Dreux's request, he had chosen a text which, in the

, attentive state of all present, could not fail them the truth concerning this matter the t he uttered it. His evident sensation of a at first interfered with the clearness of his ee, but in a few minutes he recovered his session, and preached a sermon which fully ed the worst fears of his late friends.

re was nothing remarkable in it, excepting te of feeling with which it was uttered and l to. He never alluded to himself, or to his of views. He was not at all an eloquent nd heard from the lips of another, and on an y occasion, his sermon might have passed t exciting any interest or observation, and aded away from the memory of its hearers he thousand other appeals which are lost rgotten. But heard on such an occasion, he nerves of both speaker and listeners were d, it could not fail to possess an interest far : than either eloquence or power could have it: it was the painful parting from old friends, xious holding out of the hand to new ones. llerton was destined to find, as some others one, that though his own party were forward e to cast him off, the opposite one was shy of ing him.

ux also was destined to prove that no man, er popular he has been, or however necessary s seemed in a place, can leave it even for a ime, and returning, take up his old position.

His friends had been excited about him when he left them, and in their expressions of regret and esteem on that occasion, they had exhausted all that they felt for him. He now returned to find that they were already accustomed to do without him, and that his place, however inadequately, was filled.

Allerton's natural cheerfulness returned when once he had honestly given utterance to his new feelings. And Dreux was too well pleased with him, with Elinor's prospects, and the hope of remaining at Westport,—which, for many reasons, he wished to do for the present,—to think much about what degree of popularity he was likely to possess. Besides, he had not finished half his work for the Society before mentioned, and, before he had seen another Sunday at Westport, he was obliged to leave Allerton and proceed to Yorkshire.

During the next six weeks he twice made a flying visit to the Isle of Wight, to see how his brother-in-law elect proceeded with his wooing. Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone had been invited to spend a few weeks with Mrs. Theresa, and while Allerton wooed the young lady, the two old ones wooed him. Never was man made so much of. His voice, his hair, his walk, his house, his pedigree, were subjects of never-ceasing discussion and interest; they almost rivalled Elinor's wedding dresses, some of which, by the bye, they made him choose;

and he was discovered one morning by Dreux, with a milliner's book full of patterns of silk in his hand, and a very puzzled expression on his face, while he tried to decide between the merits of brocade, glacé, shot and striped silk, and betrayed, by his deliberate choice, the most horrid taste, selecting the largest patterns and the most gaudy colours he could find.

It has lately been discovered by the learned that weddings are pretty nearly all alike. The ceremony does not admit of much variety; it must either be read or chanted; and though (entirely for the sake of variety) we have heard of one or two marriages lately which have been conducted by three or four clergymen, we do not think even one of these would be worth describing.

If weddings are alike, so must descriptions of them partake of a certain sameness. When you have heard whether the bride behaved well, and whether any good speeches were made at the breakfast, you have heard all that is worth hearing.

On the occasion of Elinor's wedding she behaved extremely ill, that is to say, she wept in the church and at the breakfast, though she had no one to take leave of but her aunt, who certainly betrayed no answering emotion. As for Allerton, it is a well-known fact, that on the occasion of his marriage, a retiring, silent, and even a gloomy man will pluck up courage, and often make a speech that will astonish everybody. But nobody ever heard either

a hilarious man, a rattle, or an affectionate, merry-hearted fellow, open his lips on that day without breaking down, stammering, contradicting himself, or betraying great alarm. Allerton did all this, and yet he sat down with the applause of the company!

But the company, notwithstanding, were glad when that tedious morning was over, and the bride and bridegroom fairly off; for in spite of Elinor's involuntary weeping, and Allerton's nervousness, they were not in any fear for their happiness, for they perceived that the latter had no sooner handed his bride into the carriage than he became himself again, and as for the former, when once the dreaded publicity was over, her face recovered its smiling expression.

CHAPTER XXV.

MARION WAITS AT TABLE.

THE time during which Dreux had agreed to travel for the Society before mentioned wanted still a fortnight of its completion, and having seen Allerton and his sister set out on their short wedding tour, he once more plunged into the exciting business of sermons and meetings. The time passed rapidly, for he was fond of travelling, and had now a pleasant future to look forward to. He had reached his greatest distance from Westport, and was already turning homeward, when, finding himself within ten miles of his uncle, Colonel Norland, he thought it only his duty to call upon him. He had previously received a communication from Mr. Raeburn, requesting that he would come round by Swanstead, and hold a local meeting near there.

It was about one o'clock on a sultry day that he arrived at the Colonel's house, and was shown into a small room to wait for him. He had sent in his card, and, while expecting his uncle's entrance

he stood looking out towards the redoubtable pond which had so completely altered his prospects in life.

Now Colonel Norland, during the last fourteen years, had met with very little to vary his existence. He had got heavier, and had taken to riding a quieter horse, that was all. It was natural, therefore, that he should forget how much the young had changed during the same period. When he was told that his nephew, Mr. Dreux, had called upon him, he thought of him, despite his knowledge that he was in orders, as still the break-neck, mischievous, high-spirited boy who had ridden to cover on one of his best horses, and ruined him by his reckless riding. Such being the case, he was rather astonished when he came into the room to be greeted by a young man of decidedly commanding presence and a full head taller than himself.

"Well, Sir," said the Colonel, after a good stare, "and to what may I be indebted for the honour of this visit?"

His nephew explained that, being in the neighbourhood, he thought it his duty to call.

"Oh!" said the old Colonel, and sitting down by the table he commenced an earnest scrutiny of his nephew's person, which that gentleman having some difficulty in sustaining with gravity, turned his face towards the window.

"No, no, Arthur," cried the old man, "—needn't look that way; that's all forgotten. I bear no

malice—Ahem. You think your visit particularly well timed, Sir, don't you?"

This was said with an air of banter which his nephew could not at all understand.

"It would appear that if I did think so I was mistaken," he replied. "But to tell the truth, I really know no reason why it should be."

"Oh, you don't, don't you," replied the Colonel, who with a very red face and very white whiskers sat staring at him as if he did not exactly know whether to quarrel with him or make him welcome. "You don't know the disgrace that the family has sustained lately, don't you? Joseph Norland, Sir, your cousin, my heir, he's a—he's a humbug, Sir; he's been plucked, Sir,—plucked in his little go."

Dreux's look of obvious mortification and annoyance pleased the irascible old man.

"I wrote to him, Sir," he proceeded, "and I told him he was the greatest fool that ever disgraced the name of Norland. I told him he was a fool, and so he is. I told him he should never touch a sixpence that I could keep from him. The Norland estate he must have, but he shan't lay his finger on an inch of my property that's unentailed; no, that he shan't—no, nor on that estate in the vale of Swanstead, or the house that Raeburn has a lease of. He shall never touch a brick of it, so help me—. No, I forgot you were a parson—but he shan't, Sir, for all that."

There was nothing to be said in reply, so his nephew tried to turn the conversation.

"Joseph, Sir," cried the Colonel, not deigning to notice the interruption, "Joseph is a born fool. He scents himself, Sir. I've told him over and over again that no man but a fool would cover himself with studs and jewels. It's no use. He turn off my water-springs and kill my hunters! No, trust him. And then to go and get plucked. Ugh! If ever he brings his—his odious little pug nose into my presence again"—

Here his nephew burst into an irresistible fit of laughter.

"Sir," cried the Colonel, in a momentary passion, "you play your cards remarkably ill; but you always did,—it's in the family. Your father, Sir, lost his first love by making game of her mother. You'd better mind what you're about. Ring the bell, will you?—I want lunch," he shouted, when the footman appeared. "Sit down, Arthur; you're not going yet. Sit down, I say."

His nephew sat down.

"Well, Sir," proceeded the Colonel, "and so you've lost your property. But if you came to borrow anything of me"—

"I did not," replied his nephew, looking at him steadily; "I can live on my curacy. I did not suppose you would have inquired about my affairs; but you might have been sure I should not have

come here unless I could have answered your questions satisfactorily."

"Then how do you live?" asked the Colonel.

"I live in lodgings on 140*l.* a-year, and I have a pupil. I was in difficulties when first the house failed, but I have paid my debts, and owe nothing to any one."

The old man considered his face attentively. "Then you want nothing of me," he repeated. "Well, I confess I thought you did. You need not look alarmed; I don't want to force my favours upon you, I am sure."

"Thank you, uncle," replied the nephew, now for the first time giving him his title.

"Ah, 'thank you, uncle,'" repeated the old gentleman, in a musing tone. "If it had not been for your own preposterous conduct, Arthur Dreux, you might still have possessed a handsome income, instead of being a poor parson, with nothing to depend upon but—excuse me—your beggarly pay."

"Sir," said his nephew, "I do not wish to annoy you; but since it was the circumstance of your renouncing me which put it afterwards in my power to take orders, I must say"—

"Not that you don't regret it. You won't say that."

"My being in orders is my greatest happiness. I wish to devote my life to what I have undertaken. If I had remained your heir, you would not have suffered me to go into the Church."

"No, that I wouldn't,—catch me! You should have been in Parliament before now."

"Then you cannot expect me to regret what has made me my own master."

"You dare to repeat that, Sir! You dare to tell me you are glad of it! Say it again, Sir!"

"Say I am glad I went into the Church?" answered Dreux, calmly and with a smile. "I cannot say otherwise; I am glad."

"Very well, Arthur; you're like your father. You're glad you went into the Church, are you? Oh, very well! If you're glad, so am I."

"Sir," said his nephew, taking out his watch, "I believe I must take my leave of you; I am very happy to have seen you in such good health."

"You are not going yet, young man," was the reply; "sit down, I say. Since that enormous ass, Joseph, showed himself in his true colours, I have scarcely seen any one; I feel quite lonely."

"It was undoubtedly a very mortifying thing for you," replied his nephew. "But, after all, he may make a respectable country gentleman, though it is not in his power to distinguish himself at college."

"May be, Sir; who told *you* that? I should like to know where you got your information. Joseph is every inch a fool. I allow him 500*l.* a-year at college; and he dusts his boots with his silk handkerchief, dresses and scents himself, and does no other earthly thing. He's just like his mother. If an old fellow like my poor brother chose to go and

marry a young girl, what could he expect? Of course, no girl of sense would have him. I should rather think not; and the consequence is, Sir, that Joseph is the softest mortal that ever was dandled and kissed by a doting old father and silly young mother. Why, I always intended, if possible, to bring about a match between him and Raeburn's pretty ward; she is sure to inherit a good slice of his property. Well, I took Joseph there to dinner a while ago, and if you had seen how he went on you would have wondered how any girl of sense could have endured him."

At this point in the discourse his nephew began to feel a keen interest, and to be conscious of a peculiar fluttering of the heart.

"I often joke Miss Greyson about my nephew, and she blushes so deeply that I really thought the thing was nearly done to my hands.

" 'Well, Joseph, my fine fellow,' I said, as we went there, 'hold up your head, there's money bid for you.' 'Au—er,' he says (little fool), 'do you think Miss Greyson really now—really—er—likes me?'

" 'There's no accounting for taste,' I said, 'and I can only suppose she does.'

"Well, in we went, and he began to talk. I wonder I didn't bite his head off. Miss Paton, from your part of the country, was staying there. 'Did he read the "Quarterly"?' I heard one of the ladies saying, before we were called to dinner, 'or perhaps he

preferred some of the other leading Reviews.' Well, he couldn't give a rational answer, though I looked liked thunder at him.

" 'I suppose you mean to go in for honours, Mr. Norland,' says Miss Paton.

" 'Au—er—I don't think I shall,' says Joseph. 'Au—honours are very well when a man has no property.'

" 'Oh, but,' says Miss Paton, 'honours distinguish a man so much for life, especially among ladies.'

" 'Au—I dare say I could get 'em as well as other people,' says Joseph, simpering, 'if I tried; au—perhaps I shall—can't say.'"

Dreux could not forbear a smile.

" 'For my part,' says Miss Paton, casting up her eyes, 'I never meet a Senior Op. without a thrill of respect; it is something only to sit next him.'

" 'Very true,' says that wicked little puss, Miss Greyson, 'and as for wranglers, they are quite ir-re-sistible!'"

"I have not found it so," thought Dreux. With a sigh of relief to think that at least Marion was not likely to be captivated by the fascinations of his cousin, Joseph Norland, he rose from the lunch table.

"What! you must go, must you, Arthur? Well then, I'll tell you what I can do,—I can drive you down as far as Raeburn's gates. So you see there is no chance for Joseph in that quarter."

Dreux was about to answer, "I am very glad of

it," but checked himself just in time, and only said, "Indeed."

"Well, Sir," resumed the Colonel, when they were seated in the carriage, "I suppose you will be looking out now for a lady with money; that's the only thing for you that I can see. As the old Quaker said, 'Never thee marry for money, but never thee fall in love where there's none.'"

"I hope I have rather a higher sense of honour than to patch up my broken fortune with a rich wife," replied Dreux, colouring. "I should think that the worst kind of dependence. No, Sir, there is no marrying for me. I could not afford to maintain a poor wife, and I would not let a rich one maintain me."

"The worst kind of dependence, hey?—worse than being dependent on a crabstick of an uncle."

Dreux hesitated. He did not wish to offend and hurt the old man, though he had cast him off. "Dependence is a thing never to be submitted to in any shape," he at length said, "if it can be avoided."

"It can always be avoided, if the young man chooses to work upon the roads."

"The young man, Sir! I was only speaking generally."

"But I was not."

"Then," said Dreux, with most perfect temper, and calm, "let the young man whom you have in your mind avoid it, by 'working on the roads;' let

him take his share of toil on the highways or in the byways of life. He cannot do better."

"If it's not an impertinent question, Mr. Dreux, I should be glad to know why you called on me to-day."

"Simply to see you, Colonel."

"Which you have not done for fifteen years."

"Precisely fifteen years."

"At which time I renounced you, and consequently you can have no claim upon me."

"None whatever."

"But I wrote to you at College, Sir, and expressed regret, and—and—congratulated you upon your honours."

"And I replied in some such sort as this, that I hoped if ever we should chance to meet, it would be as friends."

"And in that letter, Sir, you never apologized for the trouble you had given to a crusty old bachelor."

"When I was a boy of fourteen. No; if I had thought much about it, perhaps it would have been thus: Colonel Norland voluntarily undertook the care of a high-spirited, troublesome boy, a spoilt child, and an orphan. He intended to bring him up as his son, and leave him a portion of his property. Finding the responsibility far greater than he had expected, and the experiment not worth trying, he voluntarily gave it up, renounced the boy, surrendered all authority over him, and

denied that he had any claim upon him. It was his own will and pleasure to try the experiment; his young kinsman had no hand in it; and had no right to feel himself aggrieved if, the experiment not answering, it was given up again."

"Why had you no right to feel aggrieved, Sir?"

"Do you really wish me to tell you, Colonel?"

"Yes, I do."

"Because as soon as I came to years of discretion, I easily perceived that I had not been adopted for my own good or benefit, but for yours. Of course, if regard for my father, or if love to my mother, had been the cause, I should not have been thrown loose upon the world again, to do almost as I liked with two weak, flattering guardians, a perilous command of money, and a wild, high spirit into the bargain."

"Humph! Well, Sir, according to your theory anything's better than dependence. How would you have liked dependence on your father if he had lived?"

"That would not have been dependence. My father, if my recollections say true, was more than commonly attached to me. If he had lived, and I had loved him as I must have done, to depend on him would have been far better than liberty. I should have had such a natural and inevitable claim, that I should not have lived in constant fear that one reckless act of folly might some day break the tie between us; neither would he have been afraid

of snapping it asunder by any exercise of discipline or authority."

"Should you have become attached to me, if I had supplied the place of a father?"

"I should have proved ungrateful if I had not."

"You have told me in broad terms that I failed to fulfil my part; that I flung you out and acted basely to you when you were young, almost a child. Now, Sir, since our quarrel, or whatever you like to call it, was made up by my writing to you at College—and you say you did not call upon me to borrow money—I should be glad to know whether you called to insult me by telling me all that."

"I called simply to see you, Colonel."

"And you expected we should part friends?"

"Undoubtedly; for I felt no bitterness against you, Colonel; and I have before said that what you did has turned out to my true advantage."

"You had the audacity to say it, Arthur Dreux, and I swallowed my indignation. Well, Joseph's a fool, and I can do nothing with him; and you are as stiffnecked as ever were the Israelites of old, so I can do nothing with you. There are always hospitals and almshouses. Good afternoon, Sir, these are Raeburn's gates. If you call on me to-morrow morning before twelve, you may perhaps find me at home."

With this enigmatical speech the old Colonel put down his nephew at the gates, and inclined his head slightly as the young clergyman took off

his hat and bowed at parting. Colonel Norland then drove off, and employed himself in mentally concocting the plan for a huge hospital for decayed tradesmen, to be built in the vale of Swanstead, and decorated with the Norland arms; it should be built of stone, he decided, and have two long rows of almshouses stretching away from it by way of wings. "But he's a fine young fellow," he mused, thinking of his elder nephew; "and as for that little fool Joseph, he cried like a child when I was thought to be dying last autumn. Well, the more fool he. Ah! I'll have it built just there. Rennie shall build it. No, he shan't, Barry shall. I all but promised Dreux I would adopt his boy. So I did. I remember him now, a little curly-headed chap, sitting on his father's bed. Well, I've done my best, I'm not going to humble down at this time of day. Pshaw! I adopted him for my own pleasure, did I? (He was a brave little chap.) I was rather proud of him, to be sure, when he rode to cover at ten years old, and was in at the death. And so he's willing to work on the roads, is he? Anything's better than my yoke. I dare say he remembers me a regular tyrant. I say the hospital shall be a handsome one; he has no claim. Why, he told me so himself. I'll have it built of free-stone. No, I won't. Yes, I think I will. Shall I? Yes, I will; *done*."

In the meantime, while the tall iron gates of the rectory-garden swung behind Dreux, Mr. Raeburn,

who had just returned from a Board of Poor-law Guardians, which he attended once a week, was seated at his dinner, for it was now five o'clock, and old Mrs. Raeburn, his mother, having a great objection to what she called a late dinner, on these occasions always dined early with Marion, and left the Rector to take his meal alone, Marion, according to ancient custom, waiting upon him. The manner of the dinner was this: the old footman, who was so fat that he could scarcely perform the light duties which ordinarily devolved upon him, set the dishes on the table and put a chair for his master, after which he retired to the sideboard, where he stood, lost in fat, stupidity, and self-importance; while Marion proceeded to lift up the covers of the vegetable dishes, help the Rector to gravy, and pour out his home-brewed beer.

The old footman, who was very deaf, felt in his heart a fatherly kindness for Marion, and took a fat, patronizing kind of pleasure in seeing her hovering about his master, telling him the news of the day, selecting the very best young kidney potatoes, and putting them on his plate, then paring and slicing the cucumber and sprinkling it with pepper and vinegar to his taste. The dining-room door was wide open to admit the air, the hall-door was also open, and they were opposite to each other. Mr. Raeburn had a full view of the garden, that is to say, such a view as short-sighted people can get, which must be a very poor one.

"Somebody at the door, Porson," shouted Mr. Raeburn to his lethargic attendant. The old man moved slowly off, while Mr. Raeburn went on with his dinner, Marion just then laying her hand on his shoulder, and asking if he had been to see a poor market-gardener who was ill. "Don't you remember him, uncle? I wonder at that; he is the very man of whom I bought that black polianthus in the spring; and don't you remember my telling you that it was pin-eyed?"

The somebody at the door had plenty of time to observe her as the servant came slowly towards him. He gave in his card, and was about to be shown into the drawing-room, when Mr. Raeburn, who had mistaken him for a neighbouring clergyman, called out, "Porson, show Mr. Cottle in here."

The supposed Mr. Cottle, on entering, proved to be no other than Mr. Dreux; and Marion, taken quite by surprise, coloured deeply as she advanced and offered her hand, the other being occupied with a sauceboat of melted butter.

Mr. Raeburn ordered another chair to be placed, and pressed his guest to dine. The old servant speedily set another plate and knife and fork; he then retired to the sideboard, evidently having no notion of waiting at table; on that particular day he couldn't think of it.

Neither could Mr. Raeburn think of shouting for everything that was wanted, and knocking his

fork handle on the table to rouse Porson; he therefore said, composedly, "My dear Marion, oblige me by extending your attentions to our guest."

Marion did as she was requested, excessively to the discomfort of Dreux. "This is a fancy of my niece's," proceeded Mr. Raeburn, putting the wing of a fowl on to the plate which Marion held. "She has done it occasionally from a child. I assure you she is an accomplished waitress; but though there is little precedent for it in this country, I believe in the North, especially in Sweden and Norway, the custom of ladies waiting at table still prevails."

The guest would have been indifferent as to where it had prevailed, if it had not prevailed there; and Mr. Raeburn beginning to converse, and Marion handing him all sorts of things, he got so confused, that he scarcely knew what he said.

Marion, on the contrary, after her first blush, which had tinged even the very back of her neck, recovered herself completely; for she had perceived, by the sudden, earnest look he directed towards her at his entrance, that she still retained her empire over him.

The footman looked on with a pompous kind of encouragement; the host was very pressing, and the waitress very attentive, but the guest scarcely touched a mouthful; he was truly glad when the dinner was over, and during the rest of the evening he could not but perceive that Marion treated him

with marked politeness and attention, a solicitude to please far different to the *insouciance* with which she had passed over his first advances. She played and sang for him, she showed him her most beautiful plants, and took infinite pains to explain why one particular geranium was better than another.

But all she said failed to raise the spirits of their guest; on the contrary, it made him feel his present position and his "beggarly pay" the more; his visit also showed him, what he had not previously known, that Mr. Raeburn was rich, and Marion, even in the days of his prosperity, would have been a decidedly good match for him, if, as the old Colonel had said, she was to inherit a "good slice of old Raeburn's property."

The fancy dawned upon him (for he treated it only as an idle fancy) that, if he now could offer such a home as he had formerly possessed, and if he could have time given him to make an impression, he might possibly get a different answer; but he put it aside, for the thing was altogether out of the question, and the less he thought on it the better for his own peace.

Mr. Raeburn had insisted on his staying the night, for the next morning they were to go together to a place about five miles off, to hold a meeting.

The next day, at breakfast, he felt very much agitated; poverty had never seemed half so bitter to him as now,—this was one of its real evils; and,

as he now and then glanced at Marion, he fancied that she, too, looked ill at ease.

How he got over the time till ten o'clock he scarcely knew, though he afterwards remembered that hour as one of the most uncomfortable of his life. His features were pale from agitation; and, in his pre-occupied state of mind, it was with the greatest difficulty that he dragged on a conversation with Mr. Raeburn. Marion did not help, for she scarcely opened her lips, and seemed quite relieved when the phaeton drove to the door.

"Well, good by, my dear, for the present," said Mr. Raeburn. "I shall see our friend into the railway-office before I return, and I shall hope to be at home by dinner-time."

Marion then held out her cold hand to Dreux, but neither looked up nor said a word.

They had not been gone ten minutes when Colonel Norland called, and Marion was obliged to go into the drawing-room to see him.

"So I understand my nephew's gone, my dear," cried the old gentleman; "actually gone without even coming to see me again, though I fully expected him."

"Did he say that he should call again, Colonel?" asked Marion, gently.

"No, my dear; he said he thought he shouldn't have time, but I supposed he knew better than not to find time. My nephew, Miss Greyson, is a fool."

"Which nephew did you mean, Colonel?" asked Marion, in her most gentle tone.

"Why—why, I meant Arthur, my dear."

"Oh," said Marion, irresistibly impelled to take his part, "I should not have thought the appellation was appropriate to Mr. Dreux."

She spoke so calmly, but she blushed so deeply, that the old gentleman looked at her with surprise; then he drew a long breath and nodded, as if congratulating himself on having solved a problem which had long puzzled him, after which he burst into a chuckling laugh, and exclaimed,—“Excuse me, my dear; I forgot that wranglers were irresistible.”

Marion instantly remembered when she had said this, and who she had been thinking of at the time.

“Joseph will never be a wrangler,” said the old gentleman, pitying her confusion.

“I am sorry I should have intimated as much to him,” said Marion, gladly catching at this straw as a diversion; “he has a very kind heart.”

“I’m glad to hear you say so, my dear; it shows your penetration. Joseph, Miss Greyson, is a born fool. Don’t tell me,—I say he is; and he’ll never be any honour to the family—never. I never,” continued the old gentleman, striking his stick violently on the ground,—“I never knew a pug-nosed fellow get either military or academical honours. Don’t tell me,—they can’t do it; it’s

not in 'em. Joseph, like all regularly pug-nosed fellows, is a little fool."

Having uttered these remarkable sentiments, the old gentleman kissed his hand to Marion and took leave. She was extremely glad to see him drive away, though her cheeks glowed again when she remembered how she had blushed. She returned to the long drawing-room, and wandered about in a state of unusual agitation and excitement; her face was suffused with a soft carnation and her hands trembled. She argued with herself, and vainly tried to think that the departure of that morning was nothing to her, but it would not do; her usually serene spirits could not so far suffer her to deceive herself. She had continued her effort to be tranquil perhaps for half an hour, when the housemaid entered.

"If you please, ma'am, the gentleman who slept here last night —"

"Mr. Dreux?" exclaimed Marion, starting, as if the maid had frightened her.

"Yes, ma'am. I went just now into his dressing-room, and found this ring upon the washhand-stand."

Marion received the ring in the palm of her hand; it was her own,—the one she had permitted him to take from her after his accident.

"And on the table, ma'am," proceeded the maid, "the gentleman had left this bunch of keys."

"Oh, how unfortunate!" said Marion. "Give them to me, Sarah; they must be sent after Mr. Dreux, he will perhaps want them."

"Yes, ma'am. Perhaps the carrier could take them. If you remember, one holidays Master Wilfred left his keys behind him, and master sent them after him by the carrier."

"Let the carrier be stopped at the gate, then, Sarah," said Marion, "and he shall take them."

The maid left the room, and Marion ran up-stairs into her own apartment with the ring and the keys, bolted the door, and burst into tears. She was frightened, and ashamed to find how bitter a thing it was to her, that her ring should have been forgotten and left behind; for a moment she thought it must have been done on purpose, to show that no value was felt for it, and yet she could not but remember that her late lover's eyes had sometimes, during his visit, rested on her face with a tenderness which could scarcely be due to gratitude alone.

"But he does not—he cannot love me now," she argued, "or surely he might have said so. He must have seen, by my friendly manner, that at least I like him."

Marion put the ring on her finger, and, the more she thought, the more she instinctively felt that he no longer loved her. And how should she return it to him?—should she not rather, since he no longer needed a remembrance of her, keep it as a remembrance of him? She thought she would. It

was a very sultry morning, and she threw her casement windows open to admit the air. The carrier was to pass in half an hour; she heard the iron gates creak, and looked out, but how much was her agitation increased when, instead of the carrier, she saw the phaeton, with the two gentlemen in it.

They drove quickly in, and Marion never doubted that the loss had been discovered, and they were come back in consequence. She remembered that they had intended to pay a call on their way, but that, by giving up this call, they would still be in time for the Meeting.

And now should she go down and see him again? She looked at her face, and could not flatter herself that the traces of tears had entirely disappeared. But the servants would come to her for the missing articles, she was sure, or her uncle might send for them; so she hastily threw a light scarf over her shoulders and put on her bonnet, the gauze veil of which she dropped over her face. Courage, she knew, would not come for waiting for, so she opened her door, and came down stairs with a beating heart.

She heard a considerable noise below, moving of chairs, pulling open of drawers, and slamming of doors.

"Where's Miss Greyson?" she heard the Rector say, in a hurried voice, "perhaps she knows."

Marion entered the study.

"My dear, my dear," cried Mr. Raeburn, in a

great flurry, "what's become of the Local Report and the Subscription List?"

Marion saw at a glance that Mr. Dreux was perfectly unconscious of his loss; it was the Rector on whose account they had returned.

As soon as she entered he bowed gravely, and, perhaps, not wishing to appear a spectator of the confusion which his worthy host had excited in his study, walked leisurely out of the room, across the hall, and into the morning-room, the door of which stood open.

Marion set to work to search in all likely drawers and folios for the missing papers, casting now and then a furtive glance towards their guest, who, leaning with his hands upon the back of a chair, stood, with a very serious expression of countenance, looking out of the window.

At last, Mr. Raeburn having turned out every closet he possessed below stairs, ran up-stairs into his dressing-room as a forlorn hope, followed by the two housemaids and Mrs. Mathews.

"And now," thought Marion, "if I mean to give these keys myself it must be done at once."

She crossed the hall with uncertain steps, but her light footfall did not reach Dreux's ears. He still gazed earnestly out of the window, and she actually felt afraid of intruding upon him.

She might have stood there longer if a servant's step on the stairs had not compelled her to advance, unless she wished to be seen.

She had advanced far into the room before turned. When he did, it was with a sudden start to find her so near to him. His face looked extremely grave—almost stern, she thought; although she was at home she felt ashamed lest he might think she had needlessly sought his presence. The consciousness of her own strength of feeling for him made her so exquisitely uncomfortable that her face and forehead became suffused with blushes, and she held out the bunch of keys to him, and said, in a slightly unsteady voice, "I believe, Mr. Dreux, these keys are yours; the housemaid tells me she found them in your dressing-room."

The guest bowed, and took them, thanking her, but without any tendency towards a smile. She fancied his manner expressed surprise, and was afraid he might have observed her confusion, whereas the truth was, he had merely stooped to catch a glimpse of her face, which was half hidden by the white veil.

He evidently had not the slightest idea that he had left anything else behind him, and Marion, who wore the ring upon her gloved hand, could not summon courage to allude to it. He was twirling a little piece of geranium in his hand, and looked troubled and restless; Marion thought he was afraid of being late. He observed that she was standing, and brought her a chair, then he partially drew down the blind to shield her from the sun. His excitement would not allow him to be still.

"Oh, how he longs to be away," thought Marion, and she wished Mr. Raeburn would come, for she felt an almost childish dislike to the idea of his leaving her and the place where she lived, with unpleasing recollections.

At last Mr. Raeburn came clattering down stairs. Marion's heart sank, for she should have to go through the parting a second time.

"Well, Mr. Dreux, I've found 'em at last. I'm sorry indeed to have kept you waiting."

There was no mistaking the short, quick sigh of relief with which their guest arose, took up his hat, and bowed to Marion. In another moment he was gone. She sat listening to the sound of his voice.

"It was a pity we could not find time to see the Colonel this morning," she heard Mr. Raeburn say as they got into the phaeton.

"Yes, indeed," he answered, in a tone of some regret, "for it may be years before I visit this place again."

"Years!" thought Marion; "is that possible?" and she sat listening to the retiring wheels as long as they were audible, almost frightened to feel how flat and tame everything seemed now that one person was withdrawn. "But I must get something to do," she exclaimed, starting up. "Oh, I must drive these thoughts away; I must do my German exercises, and put my uncle's papers in order again."

She went into the study and commenced her

task, but it was too easy—she could do it mechanically, and her thoughts followed the phaeton. Now they would have reached the turnpike road—now they were going through the wood. What a strange, intense desire she felt to see him again, to know how he looked just then, and whether he was thinking of her!

As her fancy pictured, he was then going through the wood; the lights and shadows were dancing on his forehead, for the day was sultry, and he had taken off his hat.

Mr. Raeburn after his bustle was very silent. Dreux's face was thoughtful. He was revolving in his mind all the circumstances of his two visits: the Colonel's composed way of falling into discourse without any preamble or explanation—his vehement disgust at Joseph's silliness—his rudeness to himself. Then he thought of Marion—her friendly gentle smile, her confiding manner. "She has forgotten," he thought, "or she would have me forget, that I ever stood before her in the character of a lover, but she looks at me with an interest which she cannot conceal, perhaps because she watched me during those dangerous hours. She is evidently anxious I should not do or say anything to betray a continuance of the old love. Well, it is something to have left her and not to have committed myself. She would not like all intercourse to cease between us, and she looked as conscious and uncomfortable when she brought me

those keys as if she had known how near I inevitably was to another declaration. But there is a greater bar to that than her prohibition: all my circumstances forbid so mean an attempt as that to obtain her hand; for my uncle not only repeated all he has ever said about renouncing me, but he never even mentioned that living of Wickley which he promised my father I should have if this good Rector of Swanstead survived him. If I could have known the pain this visit would have given me, I would not have come here—no earthly inducement should have tempted me.”

And now, to conclude these soliloquies, let us give that of Colonel Norland, who, having returned from Swanstead, was pacing his library in a very great passion, and tearing a certain letter to pieces with vehement industry. The letter before it was destroyed would have read as follows:—

“DEAR NEPHEW ARTHUR,—This is to inform you that I never exactly *promised* your father I would adopt you, though I let him understand as much, so after all, it is certain you have no claim upon me; but as I have been considering that when you came to live with me you were but a boy (and, on the whole, I don’t know but that I like a boy to show some spirit), I have decided to forgive you this once; and that precious fool, Joe, having written to me this morning declining to have anything more to do with the University, and taken himself off to

Baden Baden without my leave or advice—I have decided over again that, as I can't help it, he shall inherit the Norland estates, and I shall leave you that estate in the vale of Swanstead, and the house that Raeburn has a lease of, which was to have been your mother's fortune if my father had not died without a will; but I never will admit to my dying day that either you or Elinor has any claim upon me, for the old gentleman might have known that his will was no use at all so long as he kept it by him unsigned. I shall give Elinor's husband the living of Wickley when it falls due, which I hope will not be for a long while, for White plays the best game of chess of any man within ten miles, and has the decency to come and play with me whenever I'm laid up with the gout.

“I am writing this overnight, for I had decided upon it before I left you at Raeburn's gate. No, I hadn't, for I altered my mind afterwards, being in a passion with you and your independence. However, as you are a high-spirited young fellow, I suppose you thought a contrary conduct would look like toadyism. But though I have decided upon this, I don't mean to see you to-morrow morning when you call, but I have told Mansfield to give you this, which, you perceive, incloses a cheque for five hundred pounds, and I expect you forthwith to wind up your affairs at Westport, and come and live with me; and I expect you to buy yourself a capital riding horse, and in the name of patience let

mine alone, lest it should breed another quarrel between us; and if that's not doing my duty by you I should like to know what would be. Mind, you've no claim!

“Believe me, young man, yours truly,

“P. GRICE NORLAND.”

The rage of the old Colonel knew no bounds when he found that his nephew not only had omitted to call upon him, but had left Swanstead before he could get a sight of him. He not only tore the needless letter to pieces, and anathematized pride as being worse than folly and more detestable than pug-nosedness; but he dismissed the lawyer who was come to make his will with unmerited insolence, and sent for three architects, upon whom he laid his commands to bring him within a month the handsomest plans for hospitals that they could possibly devise.

In the meantime, a fit of the gout gave him time to cool and think matters over, while the unconscious object of his rage finished his travels and went back to be Allerton's curate; while Joseph spent a great deal of his money at Baden, and while Elinor and her husband got settled in their new house, which was Dreux's old one; while Athanasius and his mother prepared for their travels to Smyrna, or some port in the Levant, and while Marion did quantities of German exercises, all to keep Mr. Dreux out of her head.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. AND MRS. FRANCIS ALLERTON.

DREUX returned, and found Allerton and his sister settled in his old house. They were sauntering in the verandah when he entered, and Elinor's busy fingers were twining the branches of the passion-flower, which had been trained the previous autumn according to her wishes.

"How natural it seems to be walking here, Arthur, with you," she said, after the first greetings.

Allerton laughed. "So natural that I feel myself quite an interloper! I sometimes walk about the library, saying, 'This cannot be my house,—I must be come here to dinner. Elinor cannot be my wife,—she's Dreux's sister. I shall see her come in presently, and she will hold out her hand to shake hands with me.' I go down stairs, and forget to sit at the head of the table. The gardener asks for orders: I am about to say, 'Go to your master,' when I see *Miss Dreux* knocking down a peach with her parasol, and the old fellow

says, '*Missis* told me you would say how it was to be, Sir.' How I hate to hear them call her *Missis*!"

"Mrs. Francis Allerton," said Dreux,—“not a bad name. And how goes on the parish, Allerton?"

"I don't know what to make of affairs,—I have wanted you deplorably. We shall soon be all at loggerheads, though I have taken incredible pains to conciliate."

"Indeed! What is the feud about?"

"That is the mystery. But I find myself so much disliked, that really I am afraid you will share in my unpopularity, merely for having brought me back again."

"You bear the matter with tolerable philosophy."

"Dreux, I am only just emerging from my honeymoon, but I try to be concerned about it;—duly concerned, because I ought. But as for *mere* popularity!—Mrs. Francis Allerton, being only six weeks old, naturally requires a great deal of supervision,—of discipline, you know,—that she may learn to submit to my will at her present early age; and so my time is too much occupied to think very much about their feuds."

"Oh, the feuds will all come right, dear," said Mrs. Francis. "And now let us come in; and I wish you would draw down the blinds, for the sun makes these rooms very hot."

Allerton complied with unconscious alacrity, and neither he nor his bride observed the meaning smile with which Dreux watched their movements; how Elinor, without the slightest art, indicated her wishes in a pretty, petted way, and how Allerton waited on her, almost without being aware of it.

"I hope Elinor is a good, obedient little wife," he said, laughing.

"Oh yes, we have no disputes; she is a compliant little creature;—are you not, Elinor?"

"Yes, dear. I wish I had a footstool."

Allerton brought her one.

"I say, Allerton," said Dreux, "you are gradually bringing Elinor round to usefulness and obedience, &c., but I hope you won't be quite a domestic tyrant."

"What is the use of laughing, Dreux?—you don't understand."

"Yes, I do; I understand perfectly."

"A woman is useful, is she not, to her husband, if she performs the part he wants her for, and obedient, if she"—

"If she orders him to bring her footstool."

"You are quite right. My will is, that my wife should be a dear little pretty thing for me to wait on and pet. I am a great, strong, rough fellow; I want a plaything. I want no housekeeper, no strong-minded woman. I don't want my servants to be scolded, and myself made much of. I

want no care and protection,—I want to exercise them.”

“Oh, then, you and Elinor are exactly suited to each other.”

“And you have just discovered that fact?”

“I discovered some time ago that you were Elinor’s humble servant; but as, when I am married, I should like my wife to make much of me, I did not see the peculiar beauty of this arrangement.”

“Oh, he would like his wife to pet him and make much of him. Oh, Arthur, how droll of you to say it, too!”

“And to mean it, my dear, for I’m sure he does mean it. Come, Dreux, what sort of petting would you prefer?”

“If I am to be made game of the moment I come here by both of you, I shall go to my lodgings.”

“You shall do no such thing. But, Dreux, how would you have her make much of you?”

“Oh, nonsense. I only meant I should like her to take an interest in me.”

“Interest! Do I take no interest in Francis?”

“Of course you do, my dear. Now don’t set upon me, both of you in this inhuman manner.”

“But I want to know how your wife is to make much of you?”

“I should like her to behave in her natural manner; but I should like it to be her nature to—Oh, you know what I mean.”

"No, we don't. Now, Francis, let him alone. Well, Arthur?"

"Well, if ever I have a wife I have no doubt I shall be very fond of her."

"To be sure you will; and, as far as that goes, you'll so blindly believe in her, you'll think her such perfection, that you will be under her dominion whether you know it or not. But that's not the point."

"Well, if I must speak, I think my meaning was that I should like her to be fond enough of me to take an interest even in little things, and to question me about them, so that I should get over my reserve with her, and not mind talking about myself."

"Which you can't do now excepting to me, Dreux. Why, even Elinor does not know half so much about you as I do. You mean that you would like your wife thoroughly to understand you, to be intimate with your mind, and also to be indulgent, and to be pleased with what you had done, not merely because it was right, but because you had done it. You would like a caressing person, easy, and fit to be confided in,—that's what you would like, you know."

Dreux smiled.

"Now that's not what I require. The moment I saw Elinor I thought she would make me happy—or, rather, she would not break that pretty sort of *insouciance* to run about her house and torment herself about me or anything else, but leave the

action of both our lives to me, and let me make her happy."

"Yes; but, Francis, you are always to repeat Arthur's confidences to me when we are alone, for I like to know all about him; and, do you know, I never could get him to tell me anything."

"How are the Patons, Elinor?"

"Ah, he turns the conversation—he doesn't like to be talked about before his face. The Patons? Oh, they are well; but your friend, Wil Greyson, is gone to Swanstead—he was sent for yesterday."

"Indeed! What for?"

"You have heard of that poor lady, Mr. Raeburn's wife?"

"Yes, certainly."

"She is dead. She died very suddenly a few days ago, and he was sent for to go to the funeral."

"I saw Mr. Raeburn ten days since, and my uncle."

"Indeed! Why, did you go of your own accord and call upon him? and was he friendly, Arthur? and did you see Joseph, the heir?"

"How many questions you ask, my dear! Yes, I called of my own accord. The old Colonel is not the least like my recollection of him—not nearly so formidable. He was tolerably friendly—not very. Joseph has been plucked."

"Yes, we knew of that. Francis, do you want me to go?"

"No, my dear; I always want you to stay."

"But I thought you wanted perhaps to talk to Arthur about your feuds and sermons and things; besides, I think I must go, for it is time to dress for dinner."

Allerton opened the door for her and let her depart, whereupon the brothers-in-law fell into discourse at once about their "sermons and things," and Dreux was quite astonished at the degree of ill feeling which had been manifested against Allerton.

"It appears then that you have no chance of being useful here," he said, when the narration had been brought to a close, "because these foolish disputes, jealousies, and heartburnings are more *respecting you* than with you; and, as they are quite unreasonable, I do not see how you are to combat them, or even how you can take notice of them; and yet I would not take any steps towards leaving the town at present."

"No, but we have neither of us any particular tie to this place, Dreux."

"Certainly not." And being alone now with his brother-in-law, Dreux told him without difficulty his own position with relation to his uncle, taking particular care that he should not imagine he was ever likely to inherit anything from him.

Having done this, and relieved his mind of all he had wished to say, he dined with Allerton and his sister—attended a stormy vestry meeting—came back to tea, and went to his lodgings very late, where, to his surprise, he found a letter bearing the

Norland arms awaiting him. He turned it over and examined it minutely before opening it, as people often will do when they expect to find something of importance inside; then he broke the seal and sat down by the table to read. Now the old Colonel during his fit of the gout had forgiven Dreux, and was even reduced to such a state of *ennui* and dependence that he had detected himself wishing for the plucked and pug-nosed Joseph, who, to do him justice, was decidedly fond of his crusty uncle. But then to ask either of them to come to him when the architects were busy on his hospital plans appeared, he thought, a meanness. How could he condescend to be amused by young men whom he intended to disinherit? On the other hand how could he bear to dismiss the said architects, whose high praise of his liberality was always ringing in his ears, without making himself an object of ridicule as a doting old fellow, who did not know his own mind? He decided to take a middle course. He put off the architects, as he said, *till the spring*, and wrote a letter on the sly to Joseph, peremptorily desiring him to come home and be forgiven. He then took Dreux into consideration, and resolved to leave him what he knew was justly his due, but not to make him any promises. He accordingly wrote a letter in the imperative mood, commanding, entreating, exhorting, and permitting him to come and spend a month at Norland Court, abusing him for not having called again, and

launching into a digression respecting the conduct of the late Mr. Dreux when he was in Parliament—at which time the brothers-in-law had quarrelled—and concluding with the assurance that no living nephew had any claim upon him, and that his nephew had better come or he would rue it. Having thus descended to threats, he signed himself, “Yours, young man, according to your behaviour, P. Grice Norland.” But after that followed a postscript in which the poor old Colonel, probably having slept over the former part of his letter, could not bear to leave any stone unturned which he could turn without committing himself. “His nephew should do pretty much as he liked—might have the servants in to prayers—he himself had no objection to hear the lessons for the day, for as he should leave him nothing he was willing to make his visit comfortable, and he supposed, as he was one of Raeburn’s sort, he would want to make his house into a church—so let him stay away if he dared!”

Dreux read the letter, and decided to decline his uncle’s invitation, for, indeed, he had scarcely entered upon his duties as Allerton’s curate, and to leave him now that he was embroiled with his parishioners, and now that he really wanted advice and assistance in carrying out the various new plans he had begun was not to be thought of for a moment. He put it in his pocket, and the next morning, when he went to Allerton’s house, he showed it to Elinor, thinking it would amuse her.

"You will go, of course, Arthur?" she remarked when she had read it.

"Go, my dear; no, most certainly I will not go."

"Not go, Arthur! You astonish me—you amaze me beyond measure."

"Why, even supposing I wished to go, my dear, how could I do it consistently with my first duties?"

"Your first duties, Arthur! surely this is one of them."

Dreux smiled, and seemed inclined to put the question by, but she would not hear of it. "I am sure you would agree with me, dearest," she continued, addressing her husband; "read this, and say whether Arthur ought not to go."

"Yes, read it, Allerton, by all means, but mind you give it against her; however, whether you do or not, I shall not accept you as umpire. I shall not go."

Allerton did read the letter, and his opinion so decidedly coincided with that of his wife, he seemed to think it of so much importance that Dreux should go immediately, that, though the latter was fretted and secretly annoyed almost beyond measure, he at last suffered himself to be argued, entreated, and coaxed into it; yet so obvious was his chagrin, that when he had written a letter of acceptance and suffered it to be despatched, his brother and sister almost wished they had let him alone.

During the day, while he was fully occupied, he contrived to forget his mortification; but when the trio again dined together, and the subject was discussed, he could not altogether conceal it.

Allerton, true to his impulsive nature, began to blame himself openly for the part he had taken. Elinor was silent, but she doubted whether she had acted wisely.

"I wish I had sense enough to let other people's affairs alone," said Allerton moodily. "I know nothing about this old uncle, and I have persuaded Dreux to go to him at a time when he particularly wished to stay with us, and we particularly wanted to have him."

"It is only for a month, dear," said Elinor, "and then we shall have him back again."

"The fact was, I urged it the more because I thought he was deterred by the idea of leaving me with too much on my hands."

"Never mind, Allerton," returned his brother-in-law, sighing uneasily, and thinking, that as the thing must be done, he would try to do it graciously; "I dare say you are right, and that it is a duty to go. At any rate, I know that neither you nor Elinor would have urged it, unless you had believed it was for my profit or happiness, and I shall try not to be uneasy about the parish—mere clerical help you can easily get."

"And for the rest we must correspond. I have been so wishing for your cool temper and your

clear head, thinking everything would come right when I had them to back me; and now the idea of my having flung them from me against your will!"—

"Do not let us discuss the matter any further. I must start to-morrow; let me enjoy myself here with you while I can."

"But after all," said Elinor, "why so very averse to go?"

"You and Allerton are all I have in the world. Do you think it gives me no pleasure to see you happy? and is it not natural that I should like to be with you after such long separation?"

Elinor fixed her penetrating eyes upon him, and came and sat by him on the sofa; she felt vexed, and uncertain whether what she had done was for his happiness; and now she began to administer some of that sweet innocent flattery of the affections, which has commonly such a soothing effect upon its object. Allerton seconded her; and as it grew dusk, her sweet voice and the tranquillizing effect of evening dissipated Dreux's painful feelings, and he began to look upon the proposed visit more favourably; he could scarcely tell why.

His strong desire to be loved almost amounted to a passion. Elinor consciously, and Allerton unconsciously, flattered this passion to the utmost that night: the one made him see, and the other

let him see, of how very much consequence he was to them.

Nevertheless, when he had taken leave of them, his mind shrunk from the idea of the comparative inaction he should have to endure at Norland Court, and especially inaction in the neighbourhood of Marion, from whom he felt that he could not too carefully absent himself, unless he was prepared to lose his peace of mind altogether.

Allerton was with him early the next morning, and he and Elinor carried on the tactics of the previous evening to such perfection that he soon got into good spirits again. He must promise not to ride strange horses; they should be miserable if he did not take care of himself. He was by no means to trouble himself about the duty, or the schools, or anything else. Allerton was rather glad, on second thoughts, that he was not to be mixed up and involved in the petty broils going on in the parish, but they hoped he would not stay if he found it dull; he was to write often, and they would tell him everything of the slightest interest,—they should miss him more than they could tell. In short, they showed such solicitude that the idea flashed upon his mind that Elinor must have guessed the real reason of his dislike to the visit, and have told it to her husband, which was the fact.

He parted from them at last, and on his journey had plenty of time for reflection as to how he should spend the month before him; plenty of clerical

employment he knew he could easily get, but he resolved to keep at a respectful distance from Swanstead, and to decline visiting, lest he should meet Marion. He knew Allerton and his sister thought he was sure to regain his lost place in the old Colonel's affections; if so, his worldly prospects would be greatly altered; but he himself knew the old man better than they did, and as they disagreed upon religion, politics, and nearly every other subject that can be mentioned, his highest hope was that the month might pass over without any serious outbreaks between them, and that, if possible, he might be able to draw the old Colonel's mind to the consideration of religious duties.

The second visit, to his surprise, began with an unfeignedly warm welcome. The Colonel was ill, and dispirited. He evidently thought he should have to conciliate, and as his nephew was inclined to be compliant, the first two days passed over extremely well.

Their first storm arose from the old gentleman's presenting the young one with a horse, which he caused to be led up to the window, that they might inspect it together. The nephew admired, would be most happy to use it while he stayed, but remarked, with careless good humour, that a horse was far too expensive a luxury for him to indulge in. Upon which the Colonel demanded, with great heat, whether his nephew thought him such an old niggard as to offer him a horse without providing him with

means to keep it. Dreux involuntarily elevated his eyebrows, for the protestations that he never would *leave* him a shilling seemed rather at variance with this offer.

"It does my eyes good to see a man ride well," proceeded the Colonel; "if I taught him myself it does not diminish the pleasure."

There was something so like affection in the way this was said, that Dreux coloured, and tried to make amends by declaring that it would be quite a pleasure to him to ride a good horse while he stayed.

"Keep him, then, Arthur," cried the Colonel, "and I'll pay all expenses connected with him."

A momentary vision of a groom leading this splendid horse up and down before his little lodgings in Westport flashed across Dreux's mind. He thanked the Colonel again, and declined the present. He evidently meant what he said, and during the outbreak of passionate abuse that followed, which began with invectives against pride, and took in independence, religion in general, parsons, the late Mrs. Dreux, her husband, and Joseph Norland, "that born fool," he stood before him with the most perfect command of temper. At last, when the old man had finished, he began his defence. He described his lodgings, his manner of life, his many occupations, his determination to follow his own persuasions of what was right, and put it to the Colonel whether for him a riding-horse was not both useless and ridiculous?

"I suppose you mean to insinuate, Sir," cried the Colonel, "that to keep a fine horse is inconsistent with your beggarly pay,—something like a pearl necklace round a beggar's neck! Well, Sir, what do you think I asked you here for, and what did you come for,—Eh?"

"What did you ask me here for?" retorted his nephew, with a smile in his dark eyes. "Why, Sir, you expressly gave me to understand that it was for the pleasure of my society."

"Your society! Bah,—talk of Joseph! The long and the short of it is, I suppose, that you're determined to have your own way, and you are afraid my yoke would come with my money?"

He paused for a moment. His nephew could not contradict him, nor repress a laugh.

"Well, go along with you," he continued; "take a good hard gallop, and come back in a more tractable temper."

"First, I shall read you the leaders," said Dreux, taking up the unopened "Times."

"Ah, well, Arthur, well, I don't mind if you do. My eyes get worse and worse."

The leaders were read, but the Colonel scarcely heard a sentence, so intent was he on watching the features of his nephew. "He thinks he's got the mastery of me, and is satisfied. Ah, well, we shall see."

"And now, Colonel, suppose we have a game of chess?"

This was touching the old man on his weak point. He had been a celebrated chess-player in his youth, and still retained a passionate fondness for the game. In less than seven minutes he had beaten his nephew in the most merciless style, though he was a very tolerable hand.

"Come, Arthur, try again." He moved the pieces with his left hand, the right being lame with gout. They did try again, and with the same result. The third time there seemed a trifling chance for the weaker party, who played with all his might. But he was soon discomfited, driven back to his hold, cooped up, blocked into an unprofitable corner, and his pieces picked off the board with his adversary's pawns. "That's how I used to beat your father," observed the conqueror. "He called it smothering him; he always hated a block game."

Dreux murmured something about an oversight.

"Could easily have smashed you before that, Arthur, but thought I would let you have a squeak for your life."

He was now in high good humour, and ordered his nephew to set out for a ride, and bring his horse up to the window, "for he loved to see his own flesh and blood well mounted."

Nearly the same scenes were repeated every day, but the old Colonel, though he tried hard to conceal it, got extremely fond of his nephew; the less yielding points in his character attracted him far more than the pains he took to amuse him during his

less confinement to his chair; and angry as he tended to be when the subject of religion was introduced, he secretly listened with interest.

At nine o'clock every evening he was wheeled by to his bedroom, and his nephew had the rest of his time to himself. He spent it in a way which would have made every friend he had in the world put up hands and eyes in amazement. He could scarcely believe it himself, but the impulse became such a tyrant that he could no more resist it than he could fly. The first evening, upon finding himself alone, he opened the window to let in the delightful moon. The day had been very hot, and now the moon was beginning to shine; by degrees she seemed to separate the twilight into two parts,—clear the lights, and deepen the shadows.

He stepped out on to the gravel to listen to the bells of Swanstead striking nine. He turned in that direction. At the bottom of a hollow, which surrounded the garden, he could just catch a glimpse of the church and the rectory. Before he knew what he was about he had leapt the stream and was in the field. Then he was done for! He began to walk quickly and steadily towards Swanstead. It was only a mile and a half, he argued, and a moonlight walk was a very good thing. But why in that direction? He reproached himself for his folly, that the tyrant wish had got hold of him. He leapt the ditches, climbed the gates, hurried across the meadows, all in a straight line for Swanstead. As

fast as one set of feelings drew him back, the other goaded him on. At last he stopped in the churchyard, with his hand on the slight gate which led into the garden. Before his good genius could make him stop, his evil genius had forced him to open this gate, and strike into a little path thick with unpruned laurels. It wound about, till suddenly it brought him nearly in front of the windows of the ordinary sitting-room. The linen blinds were drawn down, but the windows were open. A shadow flitted across,—not a very graceful one,—but his heart beat at the sight of it. There were strange sounds, like knocking and rubbing, with moving of chairs and tables.

“Lucky enough, Master and Miss is out,” exclaimed a coarse voice. “Reach me the bee’s-wax, Sally. We shall get this room very *forrard* to-night. When does Miss mean to have the study done?”

Well, it was a pity he should have walked so far. In a few minutes the blind was drawn up by the footman, and he saw the housemaid on her knees, scrubbing the oak floor. The house was evidently undergoing the annual cleaning, and Master and Miss were gone out to dinner.

He was deeply disgusted with himself, and turning hastily, made the best of his way home again, scolding himself vehemently, and upbraiding himself in the most cruel and taunting manner for his romantic folly. But did he take warning by that night’s experience? No; he made good resolutions all

lay, but no sooner was the Colonel gone to bed than he opened the window, and darted off again in the same direction:

He got into the laurel thicket, but did not advance nearly so close to the window, for he was far from wishing to be an eavesdropper; he only wished (he supposed) to see Marion, or her shadow. He again walked backward, for he heard the tones of the piano, and Marion's sweet voice floated towards him, singing, "Waft her, angels!" It sent a thrill to his heart that astonished him: he found himself a romantic lover! (And what business had he to suppose that he should escape the common lot?) When she ceased he walked along the lane towards home, and came in tired and thoroughly dispirited.

Notwithstanding which, he went the next night, and the next, and the next: sometimes he saw nothing, sometimes a shadow crossed the window. Once he thought he heard her laugh; once, the wind being partially drawn up, he saw her bring a cup of tea to Mr. Raeburn, shake up a sofa cushion, and put it at the back of his chair, then stoop to kiss his forehead, of which mark of affection he (insensible man!) took no notice whatever.

By degrees he became very familiar with the garden, and all its little shady walks and alleys were accustomed to the tread of his restless foot: he liked to see the house in different aspects. And now what he had dreaded was fully come upon him,

his peace of mind was gone, and, what was worse, he had no power, and scarcely any wish, to escape the charm that bound him. But he still took care not to come into contact with Marion, lest his voice or the perturbation of his manner should betray him.

This had gone on for ten days, when, one evening before the moon rose, he found himself in his usual place. It was very dark under the trees, and as there were no lights in the morning room, he wandered down a certain shady walk under the high garden wall, feeling quite safe, for he believed the family must be out.

The trees and shrubs were very thick on each side of him. He put the branches aside and went heedlessly on, when to his consternation he heard voices behind him. He walked forward: there was no outlet, and he found himself cooped into a corner. He could not turn without meeting the speakers, and he could not go forward. Here was a horrid predicament! Perhaps he should be obliged to hear their conversation. They came on, and emerged for a moment into the moonlight. There were two persons,—one of them was Marion. She was dressed in white, and had thrown her lace scarf over her golden ringlets. He thought he had never seen her look so lovely, as with one hand she gathered its folds under her chin, and put aside the lilac twigs with the other.

He pressed himself a little backwards into the laurel thicket, and bit his lips with vexation.

They stepped into an arbour quite close to him, and Marion sat so that he could see every change in her usually serene countenance.

Her companion was a very tall young man. He had often seen him before. He looked up to the wall, and forward into the thicket—there was no chance of escape. He was an intruder and an eavesdropper! Wounded pride nearly suffocated him, and his heart beat so painfully that he lost the first few sentences of the speakers, though he never took his eyes off Marion's face.

"You will, then, Marion," said the pleasant voice of the young giant, who was no other than Frank Maidley.

"Yes," answered Marion; she did not look very cordial, though.

"I am glad you like them. I got them at Cambridge. They are rare, they tell me."

"Oh," said Marion. She was holding up the corner of her scarf, apparently examining the pattern.

Her companion seemed aware that he did not stand very high in her good graces, and fidgetted a good deal.

"So you are going to spend the autumn here," she said, suddenly looking up; "I thought"—

"Thought what, Marion?"

Oh, nothing; only I thought you generally went down to Westport, to see"—

"I have no tie there now," said Frank, observing

her hesitation. "You are perhaps going there, Marion?"

Marion shook her head.

"You often hear from thence," he proceeded, in rather a beseeching tone, and when she made no answer, he said earnestly, "I *should* like if I could, to know how Dora is."

Marion immediately turned her face towards him full of sudden interest, but said, in rather an indignant tone, "What, Mr. Maidley?"

"You are very unjust," replied Frank, in the voice of one who feels himself injured. "Surely, if I give her up I do enough; it is rather too much to expect me to forget her."

Marion replied, with deliberation, "I consider you the most extraordinary person I ever met with, Mr. Maidley."

Frank muttered something to the effect that it was very hard to be so misunderstood, and to be looked upon so coldly.

Marion gathered her scarf round her, and half arose. He stopped her, and begged urgently that she would remain, and tell him what it was that she thought so extraordinary.

"I think the explanation quite superfluous," said Marion, resuming her seat; "you are, I should suppose, quite aware of what I mean."

"I don't think I have done anything extraordinary," said Frank, very much crestfallen,—“I

have only done what I thought right and generous."

"Right and generous!" exclaimed Marion, her eyes dilating, and her cheeks flushing; "do you call it right and generous, then, always to be sitting next and looking at one particular lady, to read with her, sing with her, walk with her,—to love her, and let her see that you do, to try to win her affections, and, for anything you can tell, to succeed, and then to go away, as if for a few days, and never return any more?"

"Oh! Marion, don't stand denouncing me," pleaded Frank; "don't look at me like an offended duchess. I should have expected to find you pleased with my conduct in that respect; I thought it must be something else that had offended you. Oh, Marion, remember what old friends we are."

Marion was at first inexorable. However, she suffered herself to be persuaded to stay, and let him lead her back to her seat.

Dreux's hopes, which had been high, sunk again below zero. It was plain he should have to hear a great deal more.

"What could I do?" said Frank. "Only consider, and tell me candidly, Marion."

"Do!" repeated Marion, with a little movement of impatience.

"I am sure you never can have heard the particulars, or you would not blame me."

"I have never heard any particulars from Dora,"

said Marion, with decision. (Oh! woman, how anxious she is to keep up the dignity of her sex!) "She has never once mentioned the subject in my hearing. I was not even aware that there had been '*any particulars*' beyond those I mentioned."

"Namely, that I loved her, and then went away without attempting to make her mine?"

"Exactly so," said Marion. "Was there anything else besides?"

She asked the question in the gentlest tone of inquiry. It brought a flush of pleasure to Frank's face. He fidgetted a while, and then answered,—

"Perhaps that she liked me? Yes, I think she did; I have no doubt of it. But, Marion, I am a beggar!"

"Indeed! More so than when you tried to please Dora?"

"Most assuredly. Have you never heard,—don't you know that my old aunt had always given out, and promised, that she would leave her property to me?"

"Well?" said Marion, gently.

"Well, I was summoned to her death-bed, I attended her funeral, and, when her will was opened, she had not left me one shilling."

"Well," said Marion again; "and so, with the loss of that ten thousand pounds, you ceased to love Dora?"

"How you talk, Marion! How could you say such an unkind thing in such a gentle voice? No,

I loved her far more than ever, because before, like a careless puppy as I was, I felt quite secure of my conquest; afterwards, I knew I should be a scamp if I could make use of it to drag Dora down into comparative poverty."

"Your own exertions, then, count for nothing in the calculation?"

"Nothing certain, at present,—nothing absolutely certain."

"And Dora's fortune would be comparative poverty?"

"There's the bitterness of it: I thought Mr. Paton would think it so mean to ask him for his daughter in my altered circumstances."

"I do not think he would have encouraged your addresses if they had *begun* under those altered circumstances."

"If it had been one of the other daughters," said Frank, not heeding her, "I would have ventured, for I really have a good prospect of getting on."

"And if it had been Dora whose fortune had been lost, should you have expected her to give you up, lest she should be a burden to you?"

"How can you ask such absurd questions?" said Frank, laughing. "I beg your pardon, Marion, but you seem determined to misunderstand."

"So you preferred to sacrifice your happiness, and perhaps Dora's, to letting her bestow a benefit. Well, I would not have believed it unless you had

told me yourself. I did not think any one was so proud as that."

"Proud!" repeated Frank.

"Yes," said Marion, as gently as if she had been uttering the most pleasant words, and yet with the decision of one who feels not the slightest doubt. "Oh! Frank, how could you be so proud, so falsely generous, and so romantic, when all Westport knew how attached you were to Dora! When my uncle encouraged your suit, and you knew very well what Dora felt! How could you let your pride get so far the mastery over your better feelings! You really behave like a character in a novel."

Her companion seemed astonished, but he was a little ashamed too, and fidgetted on his seat with an air the most crest-fallen and forlorn.

"And this, too, was not the pride of independence," proceeded Marion, "which makes people labour and deny themselves."

"I have denied myself."

"Yes, denied yourself a great blessing, to save yourself an annoyance which ought not to be worth mentioning,—the annoyance of knowing that idle people would say what a fortunate young man you were, what a good thing it was that you had won the lady before your prospects altered, and that her father had so openly approved, that in honour he could scarcely draw back. But the consequences of what you have done are of small importance to

yourself,—it is not you who will chiefly suffer. I did not think you considered money of such very great importance.”

“*I* do not, but others do.”

“You treat those ‘others’ with extreme deference, considering that none of the parties concerned are of their number. Does their opinion give them any power to make Dora forget those days which you took so much pains to have her remember?”

“Well,” said Frank, with a mighty sigh, “it is so late, now at least. If Dora thinks as you do, she would never, never forgive me. Besides, though he always seemed pleased at my presence, she might ever have accepted my hand.”

“Perhaps not then. But oh! Frank, how wildly you misunderstand! When a man is rich, and it is an easy matter for him to obtain a wife, and he shows no great solicitude about it, then, out of mere carelessness, he may be refused. But if he should afterwards become poor, and most other things should change to him, in how much higher a position he stands towards a woman who esteems him, and whom he has loved. To marry him before, the world might have said, was to do herself an honour, and if he appears to think so too, it is an easy thing to put that honour aside.”

Marion paused; the earnestness with which she had spoken seemed to surprise her auditor, for he

bent his face to look into hers, quite unconscious that there was another auditor on whom her words had made a still deeper impression.

"You think I did wrong, then?" he said, after a thoughtful silence.

"Very wrong, and very unwisely. It is so easy to be generous in the common meaning of the word. To be generous enough to give is easy; but to be generous enough to permit another to give, when the gift is one that all the world knows the value of,—to be generous enough to feel and acknowledge that the giver is fully repaid by receiving that affection which the world cannot so readily count over and tell the value of,—to know that we ourselves would have given, under like circumstances, and to feel no more painful sense of obligation than we should have wished them to feel,—is a harder and a rarer thing."

"Marion," interrupted Maidley, "how kind you are; you put my own thoughts into words, but I have always tried to repress them, because this seemed such a selfish, romantic view. Oh, Marion, if you would but write to Dora"—

"I write to her?"

"Yes, O do, Marion, and smooth the way for me a little; for I don't know how it is,—when I was at Westport I felt so very much at my ease. I thought, you know, that there was no doubt of my being accepted. I thought we should be mar-

ried in the ordinary way. I was very fond of Dora, but"—

"Well?" said Marion, smiling.

"I think I must have been rather a conceited young fellow. I think losing one's money makes one romantic; and, certainly, to see that 'the grapes are sour,' makes one somehow think them more sweet."

Marion laughed gently.

"That or something else must have altered me very much. Dora now seems to stand so far above me, and so far off, I declare I haven't courage to address her again, and explain all this to her as I have done to you."

Marion hesitated and made objections; she did not know whether her uncle, after such long delay, would accept him for a son-in-law. She could not be sure that Dora would forgive the past.

Frank got agitated and more urgent; he seemed quite to believe that his happiness was in Marion's hands, and, in his old boyish fashion, he began to beg and entreat. Marion at length appeared to soften; indeed, her hesitation had been merely pretence.

"If I thought you deserved it, Frank," she said, playfully, "I would ask Dora to come again and stay with me; for, since Mrs. Raeburn's death, my uncle likes to have visitors in the house, it helps to make it more cheerful."

But, as if the mention of Mr. Raeburn's name

had brought the speaker into his mind, the voice of the Rector was heard at no great distance, in its loudest tone, calling Marion to come in.

Marion started: "I am coming, dear uncle; I am coming directly. It is not in the least chilly. I have enjoyed the moonlight."

"It's perfectly hot, Sir," said Frank; "a most sultry night."

"Humph!" said the Rector, rather ungraciously. "It clouds over fast,—I expect we shall have a storm."

Something of his old jealousy respecting Frank seemed to have come over him, for, as he tucked Marion's arm under his, he muttered something about thoughtlessness in keeping her out so long, which their guest thought rather unreasonable, for young ladies cannot very well be kept out in a garden against their will.

Their voices grew distant, and at length the prisoner in the thicket ventured to force his way out. It was very dark, and he groped his way slowly towards the little garden-gate. He had never so much in his life suffered from the sensation of shame, as during this conversation; its perfectly confidential nature, its subject, Marion's closeness to him, which enabled him to see every feature and every change of expression, the unqualified way in which she had attacked some of his own weak points and condemned some of his own foibles, made him feel that, if they had chosen

their subject, knowing him to be an unbidden listener, they could not have wounded and punished him more effectually.

But perhaps he might have made a different meaning, or, at least, a nearer application, out of some of Marion's sentences, if it had not been for the little circumstance which distracted his attention and filled him with anxiety and chagrin. As Marion talked, she continually put out her hand and twined the honeysuckle tendrils in and out of the broad trellis work; her fingers were often within a foot of his face; on one of them was a ring,—his own lost ring, he was certain; the moonlight shone on it so distinctly that he could not be mistaken. He had left it behind him at Swanstead and forgotten it. The loss never struck him till after he had been back again and was making a speech in the evening at a place about thirty miles off. The sudden observation of its absence spoilt a very eloquent sentence. He never doubted that it was among his luggage, and spent a fruitless hour in searching for it. He then tried to remember where he had seen it last, and traced it on, from day to day, till he got to Swanstead, where he remembered, perfectly, having it on, for he had put on a new glove, and the ring-finger being too tight he had made a small slit in it with his penknife; so, of all places in the world, he must have left it at Swanstead, and only hoped it never might come into Marion's possession.

Now he walked home slowly in the dark, thoroughly oppressed; his lips parted and quivering with the rapid beating of his heart, and his nerves so completely awakened, that all Marion's words rung in his ears with distinct and painful vibrations.

After a restless night he rose early, seeking in violent exercise and action for the means of quieting his excitement.

The next few days passed. He was cured of his evening walks, and used to pace the long library instead. He had promised to stay the month; only three weeks were completed, and he counted the days as a slave might count the time which should give him liberty.

The sensitive shrinking of his mind from the remembrance of his eavesdropping had a greater effect upon his spirits than even his concealed attachment; he could not think of it without a shudder; but it had been done, and he thought it would injure his self-respect for ever.

A few days after this adventure the old Colonel announced that that "born fool, Joseph," had written to say that he was coming home. He felt a curiosity to see him, but rather disliked the idea of the constant contests he supposed he should have to witness. On returning in the afternoon from some clerical duty in the next parish, he found his cousin had already returned.

The old uncle, in his invalid chair, gruffly introduced them to each other, and never was there a

greater contrast in this world than they presented. Joseph was a small, fair young man, with rosy cheeks and hair of a sandy tinge; his face might have been called pretty, but for his little pug-nose; and he had an incessant simper, two deep dimples, and the most delicate hands and feet imaginable.

On this occasion he was arrayed in lilac boots, with little glossy toes, wore a superb set of turquoise studs, a thick gold chain, and an outrageous silk neck-tie, the ends of which, deeply fringed, extended far beyond his face like two little cherub's wings. He was scented like a whole bed of heliotropes. In contrast to his fair little features and gay colours, the height, olive complexion, and clerical black and white of his cousin looked something towering and majestic. He seemed instinctively conscious of his own inferiority in point of intellect and manliness, and with simple docility "knocked under," for it was only with ladies that he exhibited his self-conceit.

The old Colonel, so vehement against him in his absence, was perfectly tolerant of his presence. He did him the justice to know that he could not help being a soft little fellow.

They had not finished dinner when, to Dreux's horror, the Colonel said, "Raeburn has been calling here this morning. He said he never heard till yesterday that you were here. He asked if you would dine with him to-morrow? I said I could

not tell what your engagements might be, and he left a note for you. Here, Arthur."

Dreux read the twisted missive. It contained, beside a polite invitation, the request that, if not inconvenient, he would take a funeral for him at three o'clock, as he had another engagement.

He spent half an hour in thinking whether he could not get off. The very idea of that garden brought a sensitive flush to his face. But no ; there was not a single loophole for him, so he wrote an answer consenting to take the funeral, but declining the dinner invitation.

The next day was rather a gay one at Swanstead. One of the daughters of a rich miller was to be led to the altar of Hymen by a wealthy young farmer. Mr. Raeburn had been asked by the bride's mother to allow Miss Greyson to officiate as bridesmaid ; so Marion, in an azure silk dress and white crape bonnet, like those worn by the miller's daughters, went to grace the festive occasion.

The company was in gorgeous apparel—the viands were plentiful and of the very best. Mr. Raeburn stayed to hand the bride into her post-chaise. Her bridal tour was to be to London. He and Marion then walked home across two or three fields, and entered the church-yard just as Dreux was retiring after the funeral, followed by his cousin, Joseph Norland.

They all sauntered together up to the house door,

when the two gentlemen showed signs of intending to take leave; but this by no means suited the ideas of the hospitable Rector. They must absolutely stay to dinner; his niece had a splendid bed of dahlias, and it was the pride of her heart to show them.

Mr. Dreux was sure he saw Marion give the Rector a family signal, but the old gentleman did not see it. To stay at all was greatly against his wishes, but to stay against her inclination was wormwood. But Mr. Raeburn was so urgent that he was compelled to give in, and he and Joseph followed Marion into the morning-room, she looking fairer than ever, he thought, in her bridal decorations. She had a bouquet of white flowers in her hand, and as she sat by the table in the window she began to untie them and put them into water.

At last she looked up and said, when there was a pause in little Joseph's small talk, "You remember, dear uncle, that you have promised to go to Wickley school feast this afternoon?"

The Rector looked unutterable things.

"Your two guests will be quite an acquisition," she hastily added. "Mr. White will be very grateful to you for bringing them, and if they will excuse a cold dinner out in a hayfield, we can take them in the barouche."

"Oh, yes, my dear, to be sure we can," said the Rector, gladly catching at her proposal; for having

made it a great point that they should stay, he was aghast at the idea of having no dinner for them.

Little Joseph had a great many pretty things to say, and Marion could not forbear a smile, though feeling extremely uncomfortable. Dreux sat in almost perfect silence, heartily wishing himself away, and involuntarily occupied with the laurel thicket which he could see from the window. At last the old-fashioned carriage drove up to the door, and they all set off for Wickley.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALLERTON PROPOUNDS VARIOUS THEORIES.

THERE was a large party at Wickley, gentle and simple—the latter congregated at one end of a great hay-field, eating cake and drinking beer and tea ; the former seated and lounging upon hay under a hedge at the other end, eating something like a *dejeuner à la fourchette*, only it was taking place at six o'clock in the afternoon. Little Joseph was seated by Marion, complimenting and simpering to his heart's content. At her other hand sat the Rector. These three were at the edge of the heap of hay with their feet upon the grass ; behind them, altogether perched upon it, was a large detachment of Maidleys, ranging from six years old to four and twenty, with the paternal and maternal Maidley at their head, and behold, at the feet of a young lady, who seemed to be under the special guardianship of Mrs. Maidley, was extended the gallant Frank with his spectacles on. Dreux looked attentively at the said young lady and recognised Miss Paton, to whom he instinctively lifted his hat, and felt excessively

foolish—quite as foolish as she did—when she returned his bow.

He was hesitating where to place himself, when a familiar voice from among the mass of Maidleys called out to him, and a hand flourishing a bun was waved in the air.

“Is that you, Greyson?” he exclaimed.

“Yes; do come up here, Mr. Dreux. I’m so glad to see you. I only came yesterday as an escort to my cousin, or I should have called at Norland Court to see you.”

As there was no escape, he went and sat down close to Dora, and nearly behind Marion, who turned continually to talk to her cousin and to Frank Maidley.

There were many other groups of visitors, but their own was rather isolated.

“What a pleasant nook this is!” observed Marion. “I like these larch-trees very much, and their delicate shadows.”

“They are very well,” replied Frank, “but I prefer a thicker shade. I like laurels better. Those laurels in Mr. Raeburn’s garden are far more beautiful.”

Marion laughed.

“And this hay,” she proceeded playfully, “what a pleasant seat it makes!”

“Not half such a capital seat as an arbour,” exclaimed Frank; and then remembering what an ungallant speech he was making, he turned and

continued to Dora, "but that depends on who one shares it with."

"Of course," returned Marion, again half turning and addressing him with gentle archness: "though you so greatly prefer the arbour in itself yet sharing the hay with—with *me*, let us say, makes it superior."

Frank laughed, and observing that these remarks seemed to excite a puzzled look among his companions, he abruptly turned to Dreux, and asked if he did not agree with him?

Marion, half resting on her elbow, could not resist a glance at Dreux's face, and was quite surprised at his conscious start and confusion.

His eyes met Marion's, and he felt more than ever like a culprit. He did not attempt any sort of answer, but turned his head slowly towards Frank and inquired what he had said.

"I wanted your opinion as to which made the pleasantest seat, an arbour or a haycock?"

Marion did not hear his answer, for their hostess just then touching her elbow, she stooped to hear the whispered question, "Who is ~~th~~^{the} handsome statue? Does he sit there merely to show his fine dark eyelashes?"

"That is Mr. Dreux, Colonel Norland's nephew," said Marion, vexed to feel that she was blushing. But the handsome statue just then made a diversion for her, by suddenly starting up, and going quickly to meet a gentleman who was advancing along the

field toward them, apparently half afraid of intruding.

"Allerton, my dear fellow!" he exclaimed, with genuine joy, "what fortunate winds have blown you here?"

"No wind," was the reply, "but your uncle's letter."

"My uncle's letter?"

"Yes, did you not know he had written? and, Dreux, what's all this about?"

"It's a Sunday-school feast, but I dare say you may make one of the party."

"I will then, as long as you stay, if you will introduce me."

"But what of the letter?"

"Oh, nothing of the least consequence. The old fellow began to storm at me the moment he saw me."

The school children were already marshalling in front of the visitors when they came up, and before Allerton could be introduced they had to listen to a long prosy speech of Mr. White's, partly addressed to the children and partly to the parents, who were listening in the background. Then began a general shout, and a rush towards two female servants, who were drawing near, bearing a clothes-basket, full of rewards.

The ladies sat quietly on their hay; some of the gentlemen began to assist in distributing the prizes; neither Allerton nor Dreux were of their number. Dreux relapsed again into silence. Allerton, finding

himself sitting next Marion, whom he called "the air Inexorable," was quite determined to make use of his time, and not let the evening pass without finding out whether there was anything going on between them.

"Dreux," he said, suddenly turning, "how have you liked your visit?"

Dreux was twisting some grasses. He threw them away, and looking calmly at him, answered, "I have liked it as well as a warm welcome and fine weather could make me." He then got up, and walked slowly away towards the school children.

The merciless Allerton then turned towards Marion. "Miss Greyson, you knew something of my brother-in-law before his accident?"

"Oh yes," said Marion.

"Do you think him changed by it? Do you think he bears any appearance of want of health or strength?"

Marion was obliged to answer; in so doing, she lifted up her face, tinged with a soft carnation. "I have not observed any alteration."

"I am glad of that, but I cannot say I think him looking the better for this change of air."

He fixed his eyes on Marion so inquiringly, that she again felt compelled to answer, "I cannot say; I have not seen Mr. Dreux before, since his arrival at Norland Court."

"Miss Greyson," cried one of the little Maidleys, running up, "will you make me a daisy necklace?"

"Tiresome little thing," thought Allerton.

"Sweet little thing," thought Marion, and she began to thread the daisies with the greatest alacrity.

"It's to be a very long one," said the child.

"My wife requested, if I had the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Greyson, that I would give her love to you."

Marion looked up, and murmured her thanks, but could not feel at ease, nor divest her mind of the idea that Allerton had been trying to find out the state of her feelings, and had succeeded.

So much was she disturbed with this thought that she did not observe the dispersion of the children, and was only aroused by the return of Mrs. White, with Frank Maidley, Joseph Norland, and Mr. Dreux, with Greyson and Dora.

"Marion, my dear," said Mrs. White, "we are come to torment you; we want to know all about this wedding at Swanstead."

Marion looked up from her daisy necklace, and began to describe it.

"Oh, no; we know all about wedding-breakfasts and wedding-favours; we want to know whether these ridiculous reports about the bridegroom are true?"

"Indeed! I cannot tell unless I hear the reports."

"You must have heard them. Why, it is reported

at he made the bride nine offers before she would accept him."

"I believe that is true," replied Marion, "and y be repeated, as she told it me herself."

"And a very sensible fellow, too," said Allerton ; et him go down on his knee every day for a month, he gets his wife at the end of it."

"Sensible fellow !" repeated Frank, with scorn. I really wonder at you, Mr. Allerton,—a married n as you are,—to put such thoughts into the heads the ladies."

"Nonsense !" persisted Allerton ; "had not a n better make nine offers to one woman, than e to nine different ones ? Dreux, what do you nk ?"

"I quite agree with you. It seems he knew his n mind, and thinking the lady did NOT know rs"—

"Exactly so ; and what woman does know her n mind ? Well, I have got *one*, at least, on my le. Miss Paton, I am sure you agree with me o ?"

Dora laughed, and shook her head.

"You do *not* ? I would not have believed it. entlemen, and all whom it may concern, Miss ston had rather marry a man who has attacked e other ladies, and been refused, than"—

"Indeed, Mr. Allerton, I never hinted at such a ing ; but which way of making offers do you ously advise ? Perhaps you have tried both."

"I declare, upon my honour, I never made but one," exclaimed Allerton, joining in the laugh against himself.

"Oh, I do wish they would talk about something else," thought Marion, as she sat threading her daisies, of which her little friend kept bringing her more, and throwing them into her lap.

"Let Allerton talk of anything in the world but offers," thought Dreux; but they were all grouped together on the hay, and to rise and leave them would have excited observation.

It was very far from Allerton's intention to let the conversation drop; he meant to carry it on, lead it to a topic which he thought wanted illustrating, and, if possible, throw a little light on the said topic.

"For my part," said little Joseph, "I shall certainly never, au—make an offer—unless I'm quite sure, you know, of being accepted beforehand, au—I think that's much the best way to prevent disappointment."

"You do?" said Allerton, in a tone of solemn admonition. "I wouldn't advise you to build too much on appearances beforehand; besides, if you let the lady see beforehand—of course, I don't allude to any lady in particular (Joseph was looking very hard at Marion)—but if you let any lady see that you are sure beforehand, very likely she may say *No*, on purpose to show you that you are mistaken."

Little Joseph seemed awed by Allerton's way of

ing this, and looked as if he meant to take
rning by it.

"And Mr. Norland," asked Dora, "how did you
an to find out beforehand?—how did you propose
know before you asked?"

Joseph pulled up his collar and played with his
ie, but a reply was not forthcoming.

"And which side do you take, Miss Greyson,"
ed Allerton, turning his clear merry eyes upon
.

"I think the bridegroom paid a very high com-
ment," said Marion, hesitating.

"You take my side, then?"

"I think not; for a lady who could so capri-
ously refuse so many times"—

"Was not worth having? Oh, Miss Greyson,
u were not, surely, going to finish your sentence
unworthily? It is always said to be the privi-
ge of your sex to change their minds."

"Then, if I must take one side, it shall certainly
that of the bridegroom; for, at least, his con-
ancy is to be admired!"

"Ah, constancy is indeed a delightful quality in
lover, worth all other good qualities put together.
on't you think so, Miss Greyson?"

"If I take your side, I suppose I must think as
u do."

"Nobly answered! Miss Greyson is quite my
ampion. I say constancy is quite irresistible."

At the mention of this well-remembered word

Marion felt the blushes in her cheeks mount nearly to her temples ; but fortunately she could still seem occupied with her daisies, and, stooping over them, allowed her long hair to droop forward and help to conceal her face.

"Don't you think it is, Miss Paton?" inquired Allerton.

"O, of course," answered Dora, playfully.

"And you, Miss Greyson?"

"Nearly," replied Marion.

"Not quite? Oh, do believe it quite irresistible. Mrs. White, Maidley, Dreux,—do plead with my champion, she is going back ; she won't agree with me after all. Really it is very hard."

"How can I tell whether it is irresistible?" said Marion, rallying, and looking up. "I never put it to the proof. I do not speak from experience, only from hearsay."

"Oh, indeed ; she only speaks from hearsay."

"I am sure," said little Joseph, "nobody would ever think—er—of—au—being inconstant to Miss Greyson."

"Why not?" asked Allerton, turning suddenly upon him.

"O—why, because Miss Greyson, you know, is—au—you know she is—au—so very charming."

"Indeed!" said Allerton, with humorous gravity ; "being a married man, I, of course, know nothing about *that*,—at least, only by hearsay."

"Will you let my cousin alone, Mr. Allerton?"

said Dora. "I really think you treat your champion very ill."

"Very ill?—how can you say so, Miss Paton? But I quite agree with Mr. Norland, that no one will ever be inconstant to Miss Greyson."

"How do you know anything about that?" asked Wilfred, rather testily.

"My opinion is founded upon a theory which I have, and on my own experience. I believe there is no such thing as inconstancy."

"A very convenient theory, and quite new."

"Newly invented, I assure you. I argue thus: If any man leaves off what he called *loving* while it lasted, that's a proof that he never did truly *love*; for I put it in my creed, that 'love is love for evermore.'"

"You say so seriously, Mr. Allerton!" exclaimed Mrs. White. "Well, you are the most romantic person I ever met with."

"Romantic! Not at all. I said, if a man *truly* loved."

"Oh, but that comes to nothing; for, if we ask you what *truly* means, you will say it means as long as he lives."

"I will have nothing more to do with the question; you all make game of my principles, and refuse to hear my explanations."

"If you had said, 'what a man has *truly* loved he cannot *easily* forget'—"

"But I did not. I said, what a man has truly

loved,—be it man, woman, or child,—he cannot possibly forget. Of course I can only speak from my own experience; I care nothing about hearsay in these matters.”

“Oh, we do not deny that it is true in your own individual case.”

“Will any of you admit that it is *not* true in his or her individual case?”

“Of course not; but that proves nothing.”

“Dreux, you really might back me when you see me so beset. Consider, you are the first person that I heard propound this theory, and I at once became a convert.”

“My dear Allerton, if you are in the right, you want no backing.”

“But am I in the right?”

“Of course you are.”

“Gentlemen and ladies, behold my champion. I will have nothing more to do with Miss Greyson; she won’t go far enough for me. I’m proud of you, Dreux.”

“Oh, Mr. Allerton!—what, be inconstant to Miss Greyson, in the face of your theory?”

“The very best of men, Miss Paton, have their inconsistencies.”

“I don’t know about forgetting,” said little Joseph, looking very sage; “when Lion, my dog, died, I was very sorry at first—very sorry,—he had such a beautiful mane; but when I got Quiz instead, I forgot him—au—at least, in a measure.”

This would have been a capital opening for Allerton if he had wanted one, but he was satisfied with the point to which he had brought the conversation, and did not care to pursue it farther; and at that moment Mrs. White, observing that several forlorn-looking acquaintances of hers were hovering about near the hay, not liking to sit down for fear of intruding, and not quite well-bred enough to feel at ease, advanced towards them and began to talk. Dora and Marion presently seconded her; the latter was delighted at the breaking up of the conference, and found the greatest relief in amusing a countrified young lady,—a farmer's daughter, and her brother, a very awkward, bashful lad.

Dreux, scarcely knowing whether he was pleased or teased at the way Allerton had drawn him out, wandered away with Dora, Greyson, and Maidley into the long vicarage garden, Frank Maidley of course occupying the attention of Dora; it was getting rather dusk, and he contrived after a while to withdraw her from the others, and induce her to walk apart with him.

Dreux and Greyson, both lost in thought, sauntered side by side along the walks in silent companionship. At length Greyson fell back, and betook himself to the house, which by this time was lighted up.

Dreux had been leaning some time against an arbour, revolving various matters in his mind,

when, looking up, he saw Allerton advancing towards him.

"My dear fellow," said Allerton, "Mrs. White sent me to call you to supper. (I abominate country suppers.) Don't you know, Dreux, that you can be distinctly seen from the house? What are you doing, mooning among these gooseberry-bushes?"

"Doing? oh, nothing particular."

"What are you thinking of, then? Do you expect to stand gazing at a cucumber-frame and some old broken handglasses without exciting observation? That sarcastic little Mrs. White has been proposing to have you whitewashed, and stuck up by the fountain as a statue of Apollo."

"She is very obliging. So you offered to come and tell me?"

"The very first time that I have known you give me a testy answer. No, I whispered mysteriously that you were wrangler in 18—. 'Ah, that accounts for his absence,' she answered gravely; 'he is lost in mathematics at this moment, no doubt!' Come in, Dreux, there are whole piles of tarts and cheesecakes, and quantities of orange wine and gooseberry fool."

"I have no objection to come. How is Elinor?"

"This is the first time you have mentioned her; Oh, Dreux, Dreux, I am afraid you are very far gone; Elinor sent her love, and I brought mine with me, and my eyes also."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I have discovered that you are desperately in love ;—poor fellow !"

"I wish you would not banter me so."

"You wish no such thing ; you are extremely glad I found it out, for you would have wanted to tell me, you know ; and you would have undergone agonies of blushing (if your complexion had been capable of it), before you could have managed it. Dreux, will you take your back from that arbour ?"

"There, it is done."

"Be a little more brisk, then, and don't sigh. You will understand that it is a most disinterested thing on my part to bring you in, for I was very pleasantly engaged in conversation with Miss Greyson. I always had a weakness in favour of those very lady-like beings ; and now I am married, of course I may talk to whomsoever I will."

"What have you been talking about ?"

"Why, my dear fellow, how can that possibly concern *you* ?"

"It does concern me very much ; I am afraid you don't know, Allerton, that Miss Greyson some time ago"—

"I know it all, Dreux ; but that was a long time ago, and I have made her confess, as you heard, that constancy is *NEARLY* irresistible."

"So it may be in the abstract."

"Abstract ! You are overrun, and almost choked, with the weed of 'a most pernicious modesty.' Oh

that I should live to hear abstractions applied to a love affair! Look at the matter hopefully (and don't tread upon Mrs. White's lavender); never was there such a fortunate man as you are, if you choose to think so. That old gentleman, Mr. Raeburn, carefully shuts one eye on your proceedings, and won't see anything with the other, a certain proof that he approves."

"He knows nothing about it."

"Then your uncle sent for you here on purpose that you might prosecute it, for anything you know to the contrary."

"*He* knows nothing about it either."

"And these two things being fully proved, my dear fellow, I congratulate you heartily. If I were you, I should think myself the happiest of men."

"Really, Allerton!"

"Really, Allerton! Why, Dreux, if I were you, if no one had objected, and if I loved a lady, *and she loved me*"—

"And she loved *me*."

"If you speak so loud, they will assuredly hear you inside—we are close to the window. Come in this moment. I won't be pulled away; come in, I say, they can see us distinctly: eat a good supper, and every time you see my eye upon you, take wine with somebody; and mind you hand Miss Greyson into her carriage, and talk nonsense to her all the way home. Do you hear, Dreux?"

"Yes."


“ You look quite dazed. Have you two humps on your back, and a double squint in each eye, besides a perfectly empty pate, that you cannot possibly believe any one can fancy you ? Come in this instant. Here’s Mrs. White coming out to hear you talk unintelligible mathematics ! ”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MARION AND DREUX.

It was midnight, and Allerton, left quite alone, was pacing the library at Norland Court. He was deep in cogitation, and that of the most earnest kind. He had again interfered in Dreux's affairs,—had perceived the state of his feelings,—from a few blushes, had jumped at the conclusion that Marion was not indifferent to him,—and had suffered his desire to forward Dreux's cause so completely to get the better of his often-expressed determination never to meddle again, that he had urged him on to offer his hand once more, had put all sorts of hopes into his mind, which might turn out to be mere chimeras, and had made light of the Colonel's interference, which might, after all, prevent any good ensuing, even if all other things went smoothly.

He had ridden to Swanstead on Dreux's horse, which had been lent him by the Colonel. A groom accompanied him to show the way, but, by a dexterous artifice, he got little Joseph to mount Dreux's horse on their return, rode the other himself, leaving



the man to cross the fields on foot, and apologized to Dreux for leaving him behind at the Rectory-door, to make his way home when he chose. He heard Mr. Raeburn ask him to come in; he saw the Rectory-door shut upon him; and it was not till left alone at Norland that he began to reflect what might be the consequences of what he had done.

Before midnight Joseph retired, and Allerton having said that he chose to sit up and let Dreux sleep, the household retired to bed, and the house was presently quite still.

He wondered what could make Dreux so late. It was scarcely ten when they parted at Swanstead; he could not surely have stayed there long.

Allerton pushed down the window-sash, and listened. Swanstead Church struck half-past twelve. It was a very sultry night, not a breath was stirring, but the broad moonlight made the birds restless. He withdrew his head from the window, and paced backward and forward in the lamplight within. His imagination was excited; he pictured to himself Dreux coming home sick at heart from the sudden throwing down of the high hopes that he himself had given him.

Another quarter struck. The servants, before they retired, had brought in a light repast and set it on the table. Allerton, restless and uneasy, busied himself in trimming the lamp, setting a chair, and looking out for the expected occupant.

He thought he heard a slight noise,—a footstep in one of the distant walks. Again,—and presently Dreux emerged into the moonlight, and Allerton strained his attention to discover whether anything decisive had happened, either for good or evil.

He was sauntering so slowly, that while still at a distance, there was ample time for watching him. Now he stopped, as if deep in thought; then he half turned again towards Swanstead; then he came up to a clump of white rose-trees, and gave them an idle push with his foot, apparently to see how many of their thick white petals would fall. He drew nearer: there was no mistaking the musing smile, nor the look of complete abstraction. Certainly nothing had happened to dash his hopes; but whether he had any good reason for them, or whether he was merely pleasing himself with the dreams that Allerton had steeped him in, was another matter.

He set his foot upon the threshold, and Allerton opened the window: neither spoke. Dreux had not half recovered from his musing fit: seeing the chair, he went forward, took off his hat, and sat down mechanically. Allerton put some grapes on his plate and some biscuits, gave him a fruit-knife and a glass of wine. His abstraction was so complete that he never observed Allerton's watchful scrutiny, but ate and drank till his plate was empty.

Allerton shut the window. Swanstead Church struck one. He did not choose to ask any questions, nor even to remind Dreux how late it was. He thought he would let him dream out his reverie of happiness, whether it was reasonable or unreasonable.

At length he roused himself, and went and stretched himself full-length on a couch, his favourite attitude for a colloquy. Allerton, as usual, paced the room. Dreux at length said to him,—

“Why don’t you question me? If you think I can tell you anything without that, you are mistaken.”

“Well, my first question shall be, Have you anything to tell,—anything decisive?”

“Yes; but, Allerton, something has just occurred to me that your strange revelations put till now out of my head,—Can a man marry with twenty pounds or so in his pocket, and a hundred a-year in prospect?”

“My dear fellow, I am afraid we ought both to have thought of that before.”

“You seem quite out of spirits?”

“I am vexed with myself for having led you on so far.”

“Never repent of a good action, Allerton. I shall not let pride stand in my way. Poor as I am, I shall certainly go and ask Mr. Raeburn for his ward.”

"And if he should refuse you?"

"Why, then I shall still be ten times better off than before."

"How so, Dreux? Have you secured the lady's consent?"

"Yes; and therefore I shall always have hope, that if there is any change in my prospects, I may yet claim her hand."

"And Colonel Norland?"

"No chance of anything from him,—he tells me so daily. Oh, that reminds me;—why did he send for you?"

"He only knows. I would not have come if I had not wanted to get you back with me, for Elinor thought you wrote as if you were in low spirits."

"I am heartily glad you came;—you are my good genius."

"Dreux, you continually forget. You say things which cut me to the heart. Your good genius!"

"Are you never to be thanked for any kindness, because I must for ever be brooding over that one unkindness?"

"Well, as I said before, I don't know what the Colonel wanted with me unless to inform me that I need not suppose my wife would inherit anything from him. I told him I did not expect it. 'Not when you married her?' he inquired. I thought it was no good mincing the matter, so I told him roundly, that when I married her I was not aware of his existence!

"He did not disbelieve me, but was evidently so astonished that I asked whether he thought it likely that lovers in general talked about their old uncles. He said he had no doubt it was, when they expected anything from them. 'Then,' I said, 'you may take the silence of Dreux and Elinor as a sign that they do not, or did not expect anything from you.' He seemed quite amazed at my cool assurance, and declared that I was worse than you. 'Why, as to that, Colonel,' I said, 'no amount of cringing would make you leave any part of your property to Dreux and Elinor if you did not wish to do so, or consider it a duty; and if you do, my plain-speaking will not prevent it, so you need not suppose that I think I am doing myself any harm,—on the contrary, nothing would make you suspect me so much as my setting to work to flatter you, so I hope that point's settled.'

"The old fellow laughed excessively at this, with a sort of chuckling pleasure. 'And now,' I said, 'I should like to know, Colonel, what you sent for me for?'

"'What does that matter to you, Sir? Perhaps I sent for you to keep company with Arthur, for that fool Joseph nearly mopes him to death; he is much thinner than when he came. Would you like a living in this neighbourhood?'

"'Would I?' I exclaimed, quite surprised; 'that depends on circumstances.'

"'Because,' he continued, 'White has had a better living offered him in Yorkshire, and has

written to me to say so. It's to be kept secret for a few days."

"You surprise me, Allerton; I wonder he did not mention it to me."

"So I said to him. 'I've got a living,' I said, 'and though I wish to leave it as soon as I can, because my parishioners dislike me, you are not the man that should offer me another in preference to your own nephew.'"

"Take it, Allerton; Elinor is as near to him as I am. It is a large parish,—plenty of opportunity for usefulness."

"I shall see, first, if he will not offer it to you, upon proper persuasion. Why, Dreux, it would enable you to marry at once."

"He will never alter his mind. He has had time enough to consider whether I should have it, and has decided against it. Take it, then, and I will be your curate."

"That you may be near Miss Greyson. Well, we will discuss that to-morrow."

"What else did he say?"

"That you were gone to Swanstead, and that, if I liked to take your horse, I could follow you. When I got to Swanstead, I found you had gone on to Wickley, the very place he had spoken of. Do you think Elinor would like the change?"

"Very much indeed."

"Well, you know the rest, and positively I will not say another word till to-morrow."

"I would not have you build too much on this living; very likely he will alter his mind."

"I thought it was more like banter than anything else when he offered it me."

So saying, they separated for the night, and a very sultry night it was, so much so that the Colonel could not sleep, but, being very much better of his gout, lay at tolerable ease, thinking what he should decide to do for each of his nephews and his niece's husband, and quite convinced that he held the fate, fortune, and happiness of all in his own power.

The morning came. Joseph woke, and began to think about Marion in her blue silk dress and white bonnet. He felt himself always much more attracted by womankind when it appeared in holiday garb. Allerton woke, wished he had let Dreux's affairs alone, and wished he had brought Elinor with him. Dreux awoke, and remembered that Mr. Raeburn had invited him to come over and breakfast at Swanstead. "Invited" is not the proper word. He had said no more than "I shall be happy to see you here to breakfast, Sir," but the tone and his gravity seemed to add, "and I desire that you will not fail to come." He thought the old gentleman seemed out of spirits, and perhaps a little testy, but his manner was as fond as usual when he turned to Marion, drew her arm under his, and led her away into the house.

To Swanstead, therefore, Dreux walked. It was already very hot, though the clock had not struck

eight; and as he went through a shady lane leading to Mr. Raeburn's house, he took off his hat and gloves, and lingered, for he was afraid of being too early. Hope and joy had altered him so much already that he had never looked better. So Mr. Raeburn thought when at a sudden turn he met him. But few fathers and guardians were ever induced to favour a suitor for his good looks, and few men care for the impression their appearance may produce on one another. If Dreux had been told to guess what the taciturn old Rector was thinking of, his own eyes and complexion would have been the last things he would have hit upon as likely to occupy his attention. Yet so it was; the old man was tracing a likeness, real or imaginary, between him and the lost Euphemia, and wondering, if his son had lived, whether he would have been anything like this. They walked together to the house. Marion met them on the steps. Nothing could well be more quiet than the breakfast; the viands and the weather supplied all the little conversation. Dreux felt very anxious; there was a calm depression about the Rector, from which he augured no good. Having finished his breakfast, he rang for family prayers, and when they were over, withdrew to his study and shut the door.

"And now," thought Dreux, "has he really observed anything, and if so, does he mean to summon me to an interview, or must I go to seek him?"

He stood irresolute. Marion had watched her

tunity, and had glided out of the room ; the footman continued to clear away the breakings. Dreux watched him, for want of anything better to do. When he had smoothed everything, he brought Marion's work-basket and set it upon, as coolly as if it had been a common stool of wicker-work ; and that done, he brought her pretty little desk, her key-basket, and her white wash-bowl, still blooming, in water, and deposited them all as if they were like common, vulgar things !

Marion did not return. She had told him the day before that he must speak to her uncle, so while waiting some time for a summons, he at length entered the hall, and knocked at the study door.

Mr. Raeburn opened it himself ; he seemed neither surprised nor expectant ; he had a newspaper in his hand, he gave another to Dreux, and they both sat down.

Mr. Raeburn hated regular discussion and scenes of all sorts ; he knew perfectly well what his guest came about, but it was not his business to help him with it, so he continued looking down the columns of advertisements in the paper, with the slightest possible smile lurking about his mouth. He was rather surprised than otherwise to observe the desperate ease with which Dreux had worked himself into the snare of fidget into which Dreux had worked himself ; it was, at least, a proof that his consent was considered necessary.

"Well, Sir?" he said, looking up pleasantly at his paper.

Dreux had folded his arms for the encounter; he evidently expected something formidable, some surprise at his communication, perhaps a hint at presumption. Positively he had nerved himself for war, and his face was grave, almost to sternness, as he said,—

“ I believe, Mr. Raeburn, you are aware that I have lost my property ? ”

Mr. Raeburn was quite aware of the fact, but his look of surprise was genuine; this was evidently not exactly how he had expected the conversation to begin.

“ But perhaps you are not aware that I have nothing to expect from my uncle, Colonel Norland. I have, however, always taken pains to make it known that I am not likely to inherit any part of his property; my uncle has also proclaimed it constantly.”

“ He has, Sir,—something about a fish-pond, wasn't it? I've heard that story till I'm sick of it.”

The young man heaved a mighty sigh; the old one looked out of the window. There was Marion, sauntering slowly down the garden; she was dressed in a transparent muslin gown, and had thrown a white shawl about her.

“ That young lady, Mr. Dreux, is my adopted child,—my daughter; her dutiful affection constitutes about all the happiness of my life. I think it would break my heart to have to part from her.”

Opportunity, and had glided out of the room; the fat old footman continued to clear away the breakfast things. Dreux watched him, for want of something better to do. When he had smoothed the cloth, he brought Marion's work-basket and set it thereupon, as coolly as if it had been a common piece of wicker-work; and that done, he brought her pretty little desk, her key-basket, and her white bouquet, still blooming, in water, and deposited them beside it, like common, vulgar things!

Marion did not return. She had told him the night before that he must speak to her uncle, so after waiting some time for a summons, he at length crossed the hall, and knocked at the study door.

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"Well, Sir?" he said, looking up pleasantly from his paper.

been understood,—impossible that this could be all; it was as good as a consent to his proceedings. With his hand still extended for the parasol, he looked intently at the arbiter of his fate.

“Did you wish to shake hands first?” said the Rector, with an easy smile. “Well, I have no objection.”

“Bless the boy, what a gripe” (every man under thirty was a boy in the Rector’s opinion.) “Ah! dashing across the lawn, clearing the flower-beds; good thing Marion did not see him spring over those new fuschias of hers. Ah! (gives her the parasol)—well, he’s a fine young fellow. I’ll make ’em live with me; I want a curate. What, you want her to go into the meadows, do you?—and sit upon that hay under the hedge, I’ll be bound. Ah! your hand on the gate-latch. What next—a book? I think it’s a book. You are not going to read to her,—don’t tell me! You can talk without a book, or you would never have talked that ring on to your finger. Will she go in?—makes a little difficulty about it—Yes. Then I look upon the matter as settled.”

Marion was seated on a kind of flat hay *dais*. Dreux, in a convenient position for looking at her, proposed to read, and occupied a long time in finding a poem to his mind; he did at last, and read a few verses, then broke off.

“Marion—may I call you Marion?”

"I shall certainly not give you leave, Mr. Dreux."

"I think I must venture. Marion, don't you think this is a very uninteresting poem?"

Marion laughed softly. "Perhaps, if it had been better read, Mr. Dreux"—

"But I cannot read and look at you at the same time."

"Were you obliged to look at me?"

"Yes; I wanted to see what kind of work this was that you were doing."

"This? It is called crochet."

"Oh, I see; it goes over and over, first a twirl and then a twitch, till, by degrees, it comes into a piece of lace,—how very uninteresting this book is."

"I did not propose to you to read, Mr. Dreux."

"No; but I have heard you say, that you have no conversational powers, and, as I have none either"—

"You have none either?"

"None at all. Do answer me one question, my sweet Marion."

"I must hear what it is before I promise; besides, I want to go on with my work. I cannot talk at all unless I have something to do."

"Cannot you crochet with one hand?—why did you laugh?"

"You are so absurd, Mr. Dreux; and you looked at me so very, very earnestly."

"Because I am so afraid you will get tired of me,—I am certain of it. You only pity me; you

begin to think it must give great pain to love as I have done for so long ; so, in the gentleness of your nature, you——Marion, let me hold your hand a little longer. You do not know how many thousand times, between sleeping and waking, I have fancied I felt it again touching my hair and moving it back from my forehead. Will you answer my question ?”

“ Perhaps.”

“ On that day when you were sealing those notes (I hated the smell of sealing-wax ever after), was it the stupid way in which I made my offer which induced you to reject it ? I know, of course, that I had made no impression ; but, if I had managed matters better, would you have wished me to continue to visit you ?”

Marion was silent.

“ I dare say you thought me an excessively proud, conceited, confident fellow ?”

“ You exaggerate so very much what I thought, that I can deny it. I did not think so ; but whatever I thought must no doubt have been a mistake, since I have changed my mind.”

“ I know many people think so, for no better reason than that I have a grave face and walk upright.”

He spoke with such bitter regret, that Marion saw it was still a sore subject, and answered with sweet gentleness, “ We need not mind what they think, as we are not of their opinion.”

"But you thought me proud, proud even to you; and there was nothing I would not have given to have been freed from that torturing sensation of reserve and shyness, which binds me round like an iron chain, stiffens all my movements, both of mind and body, and makes my very voice cold enough to chill any one."

Marion looked at him quite surprised. He was thinking only how to explain himself. She was studying the character of her future husband, and unconsciously learning how to establish her empire over him.

"But if you had been very eloquent just then, Mr. Dreux"—

"You would not have consented; but if that unconquerable reserve would have left me for a moment, that I might have explained my feelings, I might have made a pleasanter impression; but the idea that you thought I considered myself sure of success, and despised me"—

"I never despised you, Mr. Dreux; how much you mistake!"

"I despised myself, as I then appeared. I constantly do; but I had an unreasonable fancy that you could understand me, in spite of the heavy cloak of involuntary concealment and reserve in which I was shrouded. You looked at me once or twice so differently to the looks of other people. I get plenty of respect, a great deal more than I like, and people talk gravely and sensibly with me

because I am grave ; but no warmth for years came near me, my distant manner flung off all familiarity."

"I did not think you cold when once I had seen you smile. I thought that you had the power to feel deep affection. I thought I saw something else, which I now am sure of."

"May I know what it was?"

"That you were very sensitive ; but I kept my discovery to myself. Scarcely any one would have believed that you possessed what you were at so much pains to conceal."

"I cannot help taking those pains ; it is a part of my nature to hide all those qualities which I yet feel hurt, when I find that people give me credit for being destitute of. I know my manner is icy ; and yet all my life I have been tormented with a more than ordinary desire to be loved. I have coveted affection with constant pertinacity, and yet I am absolutely without the power to attract it. My sister has always been fond of me, but even to her I have the greatest difficulty in speaking confidentially. There is but one man living who has cared for me well enough to break down my reserve and become my friend. How grateful I am to him I cannot describe, nor what degree of affection I feel for him. With him I enjoyed the luxury of free communication, literally for the first time."

"Is not this a confidential communication, Mr. Dreux?"

"Yes; and on reflection I find it is all about myself."

"I wish you would continue it. Do you know I perceive that you are very different from what I thought; not so much from what you have said, as because you have looked so different while you said it. You are not so independent as I thought."

"Independent!"

"Yes. I thought after you were gone last night (I did not repent, but still I thought it), that you would often be lofty and unapproachable; that I should sometimes be in your way with my sympathies, and my petting, and my observation of all your moods and changes; for I cannot help watching everything that I consider my own."

"Did you really think so of me? How very strange!"

"You will please to understand, that unless I had been sagacious, I should have thought so still. I thought even with people whom you most loved, you would prove unbending, not looking for, or needing, or liking any affectionate nonsense, any caressing, or petting. In fact, I had quite made up my mind that I must alter my natural manner a good deal; but I little thought that this very day I should tell you so."

"But tell me the rest; tell me what you do think."

"Oh, you will be very covetous of my attention, very exacting—a very tiresome man indeed!"

"No, indeed, I shall be a pattern—the most attentive, the most devoted."

"If you talk and protest like a man in a book, I shall know you are only inventing it, particularly if you laugh. You ought to be grave, and vow in good earnest."

"Who would have thought of my being reproved for not being grave enough? But I thought you were going to draw my character. You have told me what I am not. I want to know what I am."

"Oh, I have discovered that you are the reverse of everything that I have described. You are just as dependent as other people. And, as you have laid open your inmost feelings to me, partly of your own accord, and partly because I have found them out, your reserve cannot be quite unconquerable, Mr. Dreux."

"Not with you. Marion, it is almost impossible for me to believe that you really take an interest in me. I have been so signally unsuccessful hitherto in getting any one to care for me, that the idea of *your* caring, you—it really is past belief—taking the trouble, too, to find out my character and understand me"—

"And pity you, as you said before; yes, and rally you. Does Mr. Allerton ever do that?"

"Very often."

"I am very much afraid of him; he seemed yesterday to be reading my inmost thoughts."

"I shall tell him not to alarm you in future with his penetration."

"You can tell him, too, that he was entirely mistaken in some of his conjectures, some of his thoughts which he did not mention, but which I know he did think."

"What were they?"

"Ah, that is another question; but I should not be at all surprised if he communicated some of them to you. What did he say to you, Mr. Dreux, when Mrs. White made him fetch you in to supper?"

"Marion, do you really care for me?"

"Instead of answering my question, you ask me another. I think you had better go on with the reading."

"But I want to know whether you care for me."

"Havn't I taken the trouble to understand you? and havn't I let you interrupt my work a great many times? Look what a little piece I have done; but, Mr. Dreux, what a very little time you were with my uncle!"

"Yes, he cut me short just as I was beginning what I had to say."

"Indeed! But I said"—

"That his consent was quite indispensable."

"Then, Mr. Dreux, you must leave me, and go to him and explain more particularly."

"Don't be displeased; it is a very unaccountable thing; but he did virtually give his consent. He

pointed you out to me in the garden, and sent me to you himself; and he shook hands with me. He hinted that it would be a great pain to him to have to part with you."

Marion's eyes filled with tears.

"My hopes had been too sudden and overwhelming to be very defined, but I intimated that I should never dream of such a thing as trying to persuade you to leave him, and involuntarily I sprung at once to my hoped-for conclusion. My own Marion, you thought me proud when I really was diffident and humble, now you think me less so when I have proved myself the most presumptuous fellow possible! How I could have the face to do it I cannot think: and he actually never asked me one single question."

"Then you will never ask me to leave this place?"

"O no, never. I mean to ask him to-night if he will have me for a curate. At least if you think that my having the opportunity to see you so often would not weary you of me."

"You seem still to suppose that I do not know my own mind."

"No, indeed; but at least it was a sudden change in my favour. It *may* have been founded on some momentary thing that I said or did, which, when you know me better, you may find is not habitual with me. It might even have been, perhaps, that yesterday the wind blew the hair back from that

little mark on my forehead, and when you remembered the kindness and thought you had bestowed upon me when I lay between life and death, you could not bear to see my mental suffering on your account."

"You are a most incredulous man, and certainly not conceited, therefore I will tell you that this change of mine was not a sudden change."

"If you would tell me what cause it had for beginning, and when it began."

"It began some time ago."

"The last time I came here?"

"No."

"When you first gave me this ring?"

"No."

"You will not refuse to tell me?"

"Certainly not; but unless you had been exactly the kind of man that you are, I would have taken pains to conceal it, lest it should make you what you just now called yourself."

"What was that, Marion?"

"Presumptuous."

"Is it something, then, that I shall be so very much delighted to hear?"

"I suppose so, since you wish so much to be loved."

"Tell it me, then; I will not be presumptuous—not more presumptuous than I am at present."

"And you will not tell Mr. Allerton?"

"No, certainly not. How much he would be

amused at your fear of him! Tell me, Marion; I should like to have a secret confided to me—something known only to you and to myself.”

“When you came and offered me your hand I certainly felt flattered, though when I looked up I saw a man who had not taken much pains to please me, whom I had been taught to think somewhat, however little, spoiled by the—I must call it—*absurd* flattery which had been heaped upon him in his clerical character. I saw, as I thought, a man to whom my refusal could be of but little moment, who wanted nothing, not even affection, to lean upon, and lean towards, and who could stand best alone.

“But the next day I saw him helpless and nearly insensible on a couch, left quite without any supporter or comforter: the lines of the face were so changed, the voice was so different, I began to think that I *might* have been something even to him—that no one was so able to be alone, and to stand alone, as he had seemed to be. When I lifted up his hand and moved it away from his forehead, it pained me to think that I gave him involuntary uneasiness, and that I might never hear him speak again. But he did speak,—he uttered *my* name. Then, as I bent over him, half unconscious as he was, I began to feel affection for him. Never since has he appeared to me the same man whom I knew so imperfectly before.

“I watched and watched. His face was never

the same three minutes at a time. I saw all the helplessness, forlornness, dependence—for an instant I saw all the tenderness that a human face is capable of expressing. Are you satisfied now, Mr. Dreux ? ”

This was asked in the sweetest of modest feminine tones, and seemed to say that the speaker was quite above trifling for a moment with the feelings of any man, least of all with the one before her. The reply was given with heartfelt earnestness, and a smile most suddenly sweet—“ Quite, far more than satisfied ; and all this, but for Allerton’s upbraidings of my faint heart, I never should have known.”

“ Most assuredly not. But, Mr. Dreux, let me go on with my work ; it must be nearly lunch time, and I have done only half an inch of pattern.”

“ Is this the table of directions in this little open book ? Ah ! I see. For collar, for child’s jacket, for lace, crown-pattern ; do., rose-pattern. What strange jargon it is ; I cannot make sense of it.”

“ But I can make lace of it ; and if you wish to read I should prefer the other book.”

“ I don’t wish to do anything but sit here. This is the most delightful day I have ever been out in—the most delightful sky I ever sat under. I am certain I never saw such a hawthorn hedge before, and I never saw such a smile before,—it must have been meant for me.”

And so, in spite of reserve and the want of con-

versational powers, they continued to talk for more than an hour, during which time they said nearly as much as would have filled a volume.

“To marry a daughter is not always to lose her; sometimes it is to gain a son.”

Dreux had spent a long day at Swanstead, and was walking home in the moonlight, when these words, which he had said in a moment of excitement, returned to his recollection, and considerably tempered his happiness.

A man, of whom he knew but little, had, in consequence of these few words,—said with no knowledge of how important they would prove,—implied in the morning, and promised at night, that he would give him his adopted child—no light gift in the eyes of either giver or receiver. Worldly advantages, as it so chanced, were to come with her; and for all this the vague and unsubstantial equivalent that he had held out was that he would be a son to him.

He began to be alarmed. How could he be a son to this old gentleman! He thought him agreeable, and his peculiarities were just such as to make him feel particularly at ease in his company. He was just the man he could have fixed on for his Rector or his father-in-law; but something different had been meant and understood by that speech of the morning. He saw that it had won him his wife, and made him an object of inexpressible interest to her singular guardian; and he began to feel that if

he had been bidden, like Naaman the Syrian, to do "some great thing," it would not have oppressed him half so much as the thought of failing in this sonship, for it was a peculiar relation, and he scarcely thought he could take it upon him with much credit or success. At midnight he reached the library window, and, as before, it was opened by Allerton.

"Well," said this fast friend, "all goes on well, I see. Joseph is gone to bed in a fit of the sulks. Miss Greyson has much to answer for,—that blue gown of hers has half distracted him!"

"What have you been doing with yourself all day?" said Dreux, with a smile.

"Doing? Why, I have been back by express to Westport, and it is not an hour since I returned."

"To Westport! What for?"

Allerton laughed, and, pointing upward to the ceiling, said, "Listen."

A very light footstep was passing softly about in the room overhead. "Why, you don't mean to say you have fetched Elinor," exclaimed Dreux, incredulously.

"Even so. She is tired, so she went up stairs, and left her love to you. I thought I should like her to see Wickley, for your uncle renewed his offer this morning, and I closed with it, on condition that she liked the place."

"I am glad you brought her. Is there any Westport news?"

"Yes; Mrs. Fred Bishop has a son and heir. Her father is nearly out of his wits with joy,—sons are so scarce in his family. And your old flame, Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone, is going to be married."

"Nonsense!"

"There's what I get for telling you unwelcome news! I tell you it is not nonsense; I heard it from two or three people. Why, Dreux, do you want two strings to your bow? It is much more for the happiness of your intended that she should be without a rival."

"Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone! Pooh!—it is a mistake."

"It is either she or some other old woman; ask Elinor. But no, I am certain I am right. And now open your eyes wide. Who do you think is to be the happy bridegroom?"

"Why, if one thing would be more ridiculous than another, it would be her marrying Athanasius."

"Your prescience must have aided you in linking their names; he is the very man."

"Allerton, I am sure you're making game of me."

"No such thing. I tell you she is going to marry Athanasius, and go out with him as a missionary. Don't look at me in that way. Can I help it if people will make fools of themselves?"

"Why, she is old enough to be his mother."

"To be sure she is. I wonder whether she or his true mother will be called old Mrs. Brown. Come in, Dreux; let us eat some grapes, and talk it over."

"Has my uncle seen Elinor?"

"Yes, he sat up till she arrived, and gave her a warm welcome. Afterwards he rather seemed to take it ill that she was not so handsome as he had expected. I understand he was in a towering rage this morning."

"Indeed; but he is nearly every day."

"So I suppose. You were the subject of his passion, for during the morning Mr. Raeburn called on him, and told him you had proposed for his ward, and he had authorized you to prosecute your suit. Joseph told me all this, and very cross he is about it, poor little fellow! I understand the Colonel told Mr. Raeburn he wondered he should want to secure a penniless man for his ward. Raeburn answered that he cared for position, family, and character much, and for fortune not at all, as he would take care about that,—it should come on the lady's side. And he distinctly declared that he was mainly induced by the fact that you were disinherited to favour your suit, because a man with an estate would take his wife away to live upon it, but you, having none, would be willing to live with him. 'And do you mean to say,' cried the old fellow, in such a passion that he stuttered and almost screamed,—'do you presume to say that I am obliged to disinherit my nephew just because *you* desire it? Am I to lay myself under an obligation to *you*, and let you enrich my family?' 'I understand,' Mr. Raeburn replied; 'your changing your mind in that matter,

Colonel, is of course within your power ; it will not at all affect my interests, as I have a distinct understanding that Mr. Dreux is to live with me ; therefore, as he will be so near, you can easily settle any business matters with him ; I have nothing to do with them.' Cool, wasn't it ?"

"Very ; and no doubt the whole object of the call was to let my uncle know that, heir or no heir, he need not expect to have any claim upon me, since he had clearly disavowed it. Well, it is something new and strange to have people contending about one in this way,—rather flattering, too."

"Yes, and the old gentleman spoke very handsomely of you to the Colonel. What a strange man he seems to be ! His wife has been dead a very short time, and they say he has been in better spirits since than for years."

"I do not think that singular, as she had been deranged from her youth. Miss Greyson tells me he would not allow her to put on mourning for the poor lady. Miss Greyson, Allerton, has a great idea of your penetration."

"I have given her cause."

"What cause ?"

"If she likes to tell you, I have no objection ; but I could not think of betraying a lady's confidence."

"Why not ?—you continually betray mine ! Whenever I tell you any secret, I shortly afterwards find Elinor in possession of it. Come, will

you tell me what cause you have given Miss Greyson?"

"Will you have another bunch of grapes, Dreux? I'll tell you nothing more. Things are come to a pretty pass if I am to be cross-questioned by you! Mrs. Dorothy Silverstone is attached to Athanasius Brown;—I told you that, didn't I? Quite enough news for one night. If you want to know who Miss Greyson is attached to, ask her yourself."

Whether he did ask her has not transpired, but Mr. Brown soon settled the other point, by marrying a Miss Dorothy Silverstone certainly,—not the old lady, but her niece. And this he did to the great contentment of his mother, who, not knowing much about the Levant, had privately dreaded lest her son should marry "one of the Blacks who inhabit those parts."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE IVYED CASEMENT.

“WELCOME the coming, speed the parting guest,” is the saying of old Homer. The same thing may be said of a book,—the glimpses it affords of human life and feeling are often welcome; but its actors must not be suffered to linger too long when they are ready to depart. Take, however, one or two more glances at them, reader, if you will, ere they retire to the place from whence they came.

Marion has returned from her bridal tour. She has been anxious as to how her husband will fulfil the duties evidently expected of him; now she is quite at her ease, and as she sits by the window in the morning-room, smiles to think, that though she keeps her old place in her guardian's heart, some one else has unconsciously stepped into a higher one. “How well they get on together,” she thinks. “How fond my uncle is of Arthur, and yet what contrary beings they are! There must be some curious affinities between them which

make it impossible for them ever to be in one another's way."

Marion knew that when she was in a mood to sing, the Rector would partially open his door, that he might listen as he sat reading and writing. If she and Elinor were laughing and talking together, he would furtively stop his walk about the hall to catch the sound of their voices, and participate privately in their amusement. She soon found that her husband's step, his voice, and the life and spirit he had brought into the house, gave even more pleasure. When he ran up stairs, or walked about the house, he did it like a man who by no means feared the sound of his own footsteps, and when he rang his bell, he pulled it with a will. He had another habit, which won him golden opinions,—he loved to read aloud. Every interesting book that he could get hold of he read aloud to his wife, principally in the evening.

The old gentleman had long been dependent on Marion for his evening's amusement, as his eyesight was very indifferent. It sometimes strained her voice to read to him for long together. What a treasure was a man whose voice at its natural pitch was perfectly audible, and who was obliged to any one who would listen to him! He, in fact, often declared, that he could not thoroughly enjoy any book unless he read it aloud; therefore, whenever he was seen, about eight of the clock, to stretch himself on a sofa, and seize some newly-

received volume, while Marion made the tea, old Mr. Raeburn used eagerly to draw his easy chair close to him, and prepare for a treat with all the self-complacency meanwhile of a man who was conferring a charity.

Then, again, he had very few notions about music, and though excessively proud of his wife's singing, never presumed to interfere with Mr. Raeburn's prerogative of instructing, approving, blaming, &c. Complete and indiscriminate admiration was all he ever ventured upon, and this, though a proof of ignorance, was thought to exhibit his devoted affection for his wife, which he certainly showed in many other less equivocal ways.

And moreover he loved, as hath before been said, to be questioned,—it saved all the trouble of concocting and relating his own story.

How few young men like to be questioned, especially by an old one! Some young men are wont to declare that it nearly drives them wild to have to answer such daily questionings as, "Well, and who did you meet?" "Where did you go?" "Did you see Mr. So-and-so?" "Ah! indeed, and what did he say?" "And how was Widow Green?" "Did you come home by the fields, Arthur?" "You did, eh?" "Well, and how do Tom Hurder's turnips look?"

To all and every such question Dreux answered pleasantly. He seldom volunteered any information, but any species of news about himself, the

parish, or the neighbourhood, any opinion he wanted to get from him, the Rector might always have for the asking.

With his wife, her guardian and his friend, he had no intentional reservation; but true to his character, even where he most deeply loved, he could only draw near when invited; he could not expand, and, as it were, unfold himself, without encouragement.

Take another glance.

Marion, as before, is seated near the window, with an infant on her lap; Dreux is standing beside her, with a little note-book in his hand.

"And don't forget to go to Mrs. Mills," she says, "and tell her I wish a hat for baby just like the one Elinor got for her child."

Dreux writes, and inquires whether Mrs. Mills will know how large it is to be. "You had better have given this commission to Allerton, my love."

"Ah! Dreux, Dreux," answers the said Allerton, "I am afraid the instincts of humanity are beginning to fail. Whenever I see a man afraid of a baby I think the world must be coming to an end. Do you think Adam did not know how, instinctively, to handle an infant and carry it about without making it scream?"

"No matter whether he did or not; there were no nursemaids in his time; so let us hope he did. I don't know that I should have any particular

objection to carrying that little fellow up stairs if Marion would trust me with him."

"You know better than to think she would. Didn't I put our baby into your arms the other day, and didn't you testify unmanly fear, and quake, and declare you should drop it if it would wriggle so? Do you think Adam knew no better than that, when Eve gave him the baby to hold while she pacified the other children?"

"If Adam had any sense he let Eve keep the baby, and pacified the other children himself."

"Ah, you are never tired of petting that little Euphemia of yours. She will be spoilt;—mark my words."

"And as for you, I wonder, since you have a genius that way, that Elinor does not leave the infant to you altogether. I shall expect to see you take it up into the pulpit some day."

"He is not so wise as he thinks," said Elinor, calmly; "I am very glad we are not Adam and Eve."

"Here comes the phaeton. Lift up the boy, dearest, and I'll kiss him. Good by till to-morrow. Allerton, take care of my wife and CHILDREN."

Mr. Raeburn drives up in the phaeton.

"It is just about time to be off," he observes; "but I suppose there are some last words to detain us, as usual."

He has no wish to prevent these last words, for Dreux and Marion always amuse and interest him by their more than common attachment for each other, yet he pretends to be in a hurry, and makes as if he could not possibly wait.

There are a good many last words, for Marion has sent away her baby, and bethought herself of some more commissions.

"Mind you remember those French marigold seeds, my love, and—oh, I knew there was something else—an Indian rubber ball for Effie."

"Ahem!" says the Rector, "if we're late I suppose it is of no great consequence."

"There are five minutes good, uncle. Dearest, I just wanted to say"—

"Then say it to-morrow, my pretty—Pshaw! one would think he was to be away for a month, instead of a night. Arthur, do you mean to come at all?"

"This minute—directly. Good by, my love!" and so saying he jumped into the phaeton, which had not proceeded ten yards before there was another delay.

Two little fat hands were tapping at the glass of an upper window: the phaeton was stopped, and the two gentlemen looked up to the ivyed casement of the nursery.

A nurse opened it, and a little face peeped out—a little dark-eyed Euphemia. She laughed and nodded to them, and then she kissed her hands, and

pushing back her waving hair from her forehead, cried out, "Baby's asleep, so he can't come to look at you. Good by, dear papa; good by, dear grand-papa."

The young father kissed his hand, and turned away with a smile. The old man, who was called by a name that was not his, laughed with heartfelt satisfaction. The adopted daughter and the adopted son were as much to him as his own could ever have been; they were making him rich in his old age,—setting children on his knees who would grow up to love and honour him.

Happy for him that he had not shut up his solitary heart to brood over the bereavements of his prime,—for now this son and this daughter were his, and their children were his, and those who slept beneath the cedar-trees were still his, for they were neither lamented with repinings, nor unloved, nor forgotten.

THE END.



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